

**NVMEN**

## **NUMEN**

International Review for the History of Religions

### ***Aims & Scope***

The official journal of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) — is one of the world's leading journals devoted to the academic study of religions. It covers the full breadth of current international scholarship in the field, featuring articles on contemporary religious phenomena as well as on historical themes, theoretical contributions besides more empirically oriented studies. In all areas of religious studies *NUMEN* publishes articles, book reviews, review articles, and survey articles.

### ***Editors***

Einar Thomassen, IKRR/Religion, University of Bergen, Øisteinsgate 3, N-5007 Bergen, Norway; E-mail: Einar.Thomassen@krr.uib.no

Gustavo Benavides, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085, USA

E-mail: gustavo.benavides@villanova.edu

### ***Book Review Editor***

Maya Burger, Université de Lausanne, Faculté de Théologie, BFSH2, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland; E-mail: maya.burger@unil.ch

### ***Editorial Board***

R.I.J. Hackett (Knoxville, TN, USA); G. ter Haar (The Hague, The Netherlands); A. Tsukimoto (Tokyo, Japan); T. Jensen (Odense, Denmark); I.S. Gilhus (Bergen, Norway); G.L. Lease (Santa Cruz, CA, USA); P. Kumar (Durban, South Africa); A.H. Khan (Toronto, Canada); B. Boeking (London, UK); F. Diez de Velasco (Tenerife, Spain); M. Joy (Calgary, Canada); A.T. Wasim (Yogyakarta, Indonesia).

### ***Honorary life members of the IAHR***

P. Antes (Hannover); M. Araki (Tsukuba); J.O. Awolalu (Ibadan); L. Bäckman (Stockholm); C. Colpe (Berlin); Kong Fan (Beijing); G.S. Gasparro (Messina); Y. González Torres (Mexico City); Å. Hultkrantz (Stockholm); G.C. Oosthuizen (Durban); M. Pye (Marburg); J.R. Ries (Louvain-la-Neuve); K. Rudolph (Marburg); J. Waardenburg (Lausanne); R.J.Z. Werblowsky (Jerusalem).

### ***Notes for Contributors***

Please refer to the fourth page of the Volume prelims.

*NUMEN* ISSN 0029-5973 (print ISSN 1568-5276, online) is published 4 times a year by Brill Academic Publishers, Plantijnstraat 2, 2321 JC Leiden, The Netherlands, tel. +31 (0)71 5353500, fax +31 (0)71 5317532.

# NVMEN

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW FOR THE  
HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

*EDITED ON BEHALF OF THE*

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE  
HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

by

E. THOMASSEN and G. BENAVIDES

**VOLUME 53 (2006)**



BRILL  
LEIDEN • BOSTON

## NUMEN POLICY STATEMENT

The IAHR seeks to promote the activities of all scholars and affiliates that contribute to the historical, social, and comparative study of religion. As such, the IAHR is the preeminent international forum for the critical, analytical and cross-cultural study of religion, past and present. The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns.

*NUMEN* publishes articles that, while dealing with specific historical, textual or ethnographic materials, make a theoretical contribution to the study of religion. We are interested in studies that besides being read by specialists will be of interest to scholars working in a variety of fields. We are also interested in comparative studies that fit the criteria just mentioned (only exceptionally do we publish articles that deal with purely theoretical or methodological issues). As a journal devoted to the academic study of religion, and in line with the IAHR policy statement, *Numen* does not publish pieces that approach religion from theological or confessional angles.

## INSTRUCTION FOR AUTHORS

*Manuscripts* should be written in English, French or German and should not exceed 10 000 words. Submissions are to be sent in printed form as well as electronically to both editors at the addresses given on p. 1 of the journal.

The article must contain a *summary* of about 200 words.

The article should normally contain a *bibliography* at the end giving full references to the works cited. In the article itself references should be by either the author-date or the short title system. Titles of books and journals should be in italics and titles of articles shown in quotation marks.

*Footnotes* should be numbered consecutively for the whole article. Authors are requested to keep their use of non-Latin scripts to a minimum.

*Proofs of articles* will be sent to authors who should use the standard method of proof correction. Corrected proofs should be returned before the date indicated to the editorial address. If proofs are not returned in time, the editors will send their own corrected proofs to the printers. Authors may be charged for other corrections than those of printer's errors.

*Publications received* will be mentioned in *Numen*.

### BRILL LEIDEN • BOSTON

© Copyright 2006 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands  
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill Academic Publishers,  
Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publishers.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by the publisher provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.



# TEXT, TRADITION, AND IMAGINATION: EVOKING THE NORMATIVE IN EVERYDAY HINDU LIFE

LEELA PRASAD

## *Summary*

For over two thousand years, the notion of *śāstra* has had an astonishing presence in Hindu normative thought and culture, and *śāstras*, as codifications of knowledge, have been composed in virtually every aspect of life from love and politics to thieving and horse rearing. The concept of *śāstra* yokes precept and practice in a way that perhaps no other concept in Hindu life does, and indexes a complexity that is understated by dictionary meanings of the term which include “to instruct,” “order,” “command,” “precept,” “rules,” “scientific treatise,” or “law-book.” Drawing on my ethnographic research in the Hindu pilgrimage town of Sringeri, south India, my essay explores how the notion of *śāstra*, or, more widely, the “normative,” is expressed in everyday contexts of Sringeri. The location of Sringeri itself is significant. A small town in the lush southwestern mountains of India, Sringeri is famous for its *smārta maṭha* (monastery) and its temples which are believed to have been founded by Śaṅkara in approximately 800 A.D. Historical records of the maṭha show that in an unbroken lineage of over 1200 years, the gurus who head the maṭha have counseled royalty and laypersons on matters ranging from military campaigns and land disputes to propriety of marriage alliances and business practice. The maṭha today is an influential interpreter of the Hindu codes of conduct, the *Dharmaśāstras*, for a large following of Hindus in south India. To a visitor to Sringeri, the monastic institution with its emphasis on *śāstra*, would seem to symbolize a normative centrality in the lives of Sringeri residents. However, conversations and oral narratives from Sringeri challenge this assumption, and demonstrate that *śāstra* is one concept among others such as *paddhati* (custom), *ācāra* (proper conduct), *sampradāya* (tradition), and *niyama* (principle; restraint) that individuals employ to indicate moral authority and enactment. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they highlight subtle differences in agency, textuality, historicity, jurisdiction, and permissibility in the context of the normative. I argue that underlying ethical practice is a dynamically-constituted “text” that draws on and weaves together various sources of the normative — a sacred book, an exemplar, a tradition, a principle, and so on. Such a text is essentially an *imagined text*, a fluid “text” which engages

precept and practice, and in a sense, is always intermediary. In this imagined text, the normative manifests as emergent, situated in the local and the larger-than-local, the historical, and the interpersonal.

One encounters the term *śāstra* in countless contexts of everyday parlance in Hindu worlds in spirited phrases such as “It is said in the *śāstras*,” or “It goes against the *śāstras*.” The term “*śāstra*” comes from the Sanskrit root “*śās*” which means “to teach or instruct,” and *śāstra* is commonly translated into English as injunction, order, command, precept, rule or compendium of rules, religious or scientific treatise, or law-book.<sup>1</sup> Just as often, “*śāstra*” is translated imprecisely as “scripture.” While many times an individual may rhetorically invoke the phrase “the *śāstras* say” to validate a moral position, to justify actions, or to subvert and negate somebody else’s position and actions, the enduring sense of the term is associated with the performance of correct action or duty (*dharma*), the creation of auspiciousness, and compliance with context-specific regulations on conduct. Indeed, the concept of *śāstra* yokes precept and practice in a way that perhaps no other concept in Hindu life does, and indexes a complexity that is not fully conveyed by the dictionary meanings of the term. How might we understand the so-called modifications (to what, indeed) that individuals make between “knowing” and “doing” the “right” thing? What voices of authority are summoned by the term *śāstra* and what visions of the past and future are created by it in everyday contexts? What subjects of life and living are imagined to be under the purview of *śāstra*? Or more broadly, what kinds of cultural knowledge are called *śāstra*?

I explore such questions drawing on my decade-long ethnographic research in Sringeri,<sup>2</sup> a prominent pilgrimage town in South India, and discuss the place of *śāstra* in the normative thinking of

---

<sup>1</sup> Monier-Williams (1986 [1899]).

<sup>2</sup> Following popular usage and for readability, I write Sringeri rather than Śṛṅgeri.

contemporary Hindus, especially the *smārta* brahman community of Sringeri. Definitionally, *smārta* brahmans take their name from their adherence to the *smṛti* (“remembered”) tradition which mainly comprises encyclopedic codes of conduct known as the Dharmaśāstras and the Dharmasūtras.<sup>3</sup> Worship for *smārtas* centers on five deities; Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī, Sūrya and Gaṇeśa. Sringeri, a small Hindu pilgrimage town in the lush mountain ranges of the Malnad ghats in northwestern Karnataka, is famous for its *smārta* maṭha (monastery) and its attached temples where the main deity is Śārādā, the goddess of learning. The maṭha and the Śārādā temple are believed to have been founded by Śaṅkara in approximately 800 A.D. Historical records of the maṭha show that rulers from the 14th century Vijayanagara emperors to the colonizing British engaged in complex politico-religious exchanges with the maṭha, perceiving it strategic to regional politics. Pontifical authority gradually grew to be politically empowered, transforming a hermitage and temple into a powerful monastic institution with political leverage. In an unbroken lineage of over 1200 years, the gurus who head the maṭha have counseled royalty and laypersons on matters ranging from war campaigns and land disputes to marriage alliances and business practice. The maṭha today is an influential interpreter of the Dharmaśāstras for a large following of Hindus in south India. Until the 1960s and 1970s, when land-reform legislation altered its powerful economic status, the maṭha owned and governed Sringeri as a land-grant state (*jāgirdāri*) through an intimate web of tenancy relationships with local populations. Today Sringeri is governed by an elected municipal council that reports to the district and state governments.

The 2001 census records the town’s population at 4253.<sup>4</sup> The immediate area around the Sringeri maṭha, which developed historically

---

<sup>3</sup> The term “Dharmaśāstra” commonly refers to both the Dharmaśāstras and the Dharmasūtras.

<sup>4</sup> Census of India accessed at: <http://www.bangaloreit.com/html/govtinformation/censuspaper2/Paper-2%20Chapter-9.pdf> (p. 245)

as collections of *agrahāras* (brahman settlements), is mostly populated by brahmans. Muslims, Jains, and Hindus of other castes like Vokkaligas, Viśwakarmas, and Bunts also live in the town, some of whom have generational ties to Sringeri. Although some of Sringeri's brahmans are employed by the maṭha in administrative positions, or as priests or cooks, many are independent of it, and farm, teach, or run stores. The economy of the region is supported principally by agriculture and thus many brahmans, like Vokkaligās (who form the other major community in the area) are agriculturalists. Burgeoning tourism and pilgrimage has further diversified occupations available to Sringeri residents. According to the 2001 Census of India, Sringeri has a high literacy rate of about 90%, with an 86% female literacy rate (48% of the literate population are women).

Stories and conversations from the *smārta* brahman community of Sringeri, and Hindu life in general, argue that a phenomenology of *śāstra* requires that we extend the widened understanding of text and textuality to recognize “śāstric texts” also in the world of material and oral practices that are animated by human agency, and function as vibrant forms of moral guidance for Hindus. I argue that although historically traced to millennia-old Sanskrit texts, notably the Dharmaśāstras and the Dharmasūtras, *śāstra* is in everyday life a nebulous, but dynamic and open-ended cultural background that influences conceptualizations of conduct and is in turn influenced by them. In understanding the visage and the vocabulary of normative authority, it is important therefore to ask, along the lines of Wittgenstein: What are the patterns of use that constitute the “grammar of our concepts” that relate to *śāstra*? What “family resemblances”<sup>5</sup> are uncovered through an ethnographic study of the notion of *śāstra*? I hope to demonstrate in this essay that a lived grammar of the normative includes a wide socio-semantic field of normative discourse and praxis, one that is marked by vivacious

---

<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein 2001: #67, 27–28. Henceforth *PI*.

interplay between concepts such as *śāstra*, *sampradāya* (tradition), *niyama* (rule), *ācāra* (proper conduct), and *paddhati* (custom), concepts that make competing claims to authority. My essay will argue that underlying ethical practice is a dynamically-constituted “text” that draws on and weaves together various sources of the normative — a sacred book, an exemplar, a tradition, a principle, and so on. Such a text is essentially an *imagined text*, a fluid “text” which engages precept and practice, and in a sense, is always intermediary. In this imagined text, the normative manifests as emergent, situated in the local and the larger-than-local, the historical and other understandings of the past, and the interpersonal.<sup>6</sup>

To one growing up in India, “*śāstra*” often appears to be a stodgy inflexible set of ancient rules whose origin and clarity seem apparent only to the elders and the priests who invoke them. While the notion of *śāstra* and its cultural cognates may be intricate and even idiosyncratic in everyday contexts, a history of the term shows remarkable parallels between the debates of the distant Vedic and post-Vedic past and those of contemporary times, although we cannot draw clear conclusions about how *śāstra* may have played out in everyday life in the past. The diffused views on *śāstra* reveal continuing debate and deliberation on the nature and source of normative authority, competing jurisdictions of moral and practical knowledge, the efficacy of prescribed actions, on permissibility and rigidity of injunctions, and in fact on the problem of textuality itself.

In a wide-ranging study of in early Indian thought, Sheldon Pollock finds that for over 2500 years, the concept of *śāstra*, indexing an impressive range of “cultural grammars” has been “invested with massive authority, ensuring what in many cases seems to have been a nearly unchallengeable claim to normative control of cultural practices.”<sup>7</sup> Arguing that *śāstra* is the equivalent of “theory”

---

<sup>6</sup> See Khare 1983 for how categories of kinship expressed in Sanskrit texts and “pragmatic” kinship reflect each other in complex ways.

<sup>7</sup> Pollock 1985. See also Pollock 1989a, 1989b; and Dwivedi 1985–86.

(if theory is understood as doctrinal and programmatic), Pollock concludes that “theory” in Sanskrit literary culture is posited as always preceding and regulating “practice” (*prayoga*) because all theory is hypothesized as originating in a divine, eternal, and omniscient source, often identified as the Vedas. A text like the panoramic treatise on the theatrical arts, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Bharata, identifies itself as a “*śāstra* of *prayoga*,” a theory of praxis. Although the word “*śāstra*” first occurs in a Ṛgvedic verse to Indra,<sup>8</sup> its earliest signification is in the grammatical tradition of the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., where *śāstra* is defined as a rule that regulates grammatical usage. Early grammarians like Kātyāyana and Patañjali insisted that *śāstra* regulates, not only the province of language, but human conduct itself for the achievement of spiritual and dharmic goals. By the 3rd century B.C., compendia of dharma (duties) known as the Dharmasūtras had already emerged in Indian socio-philosophical literature, and soon, domains of life that come under the three life-goals (*puruṣārthas*) of an individual — right conduct (*dharma*), material pursuit (*artha*), and aesthetically refined sexuality (*kāma*) — saw codification.<sup>9</sup> Over the next two millennia, *śāstras* were composed on virtually every subject, from grammar and architecture to elephant rearing and statecraft, from medicine to the fine arts. What is important for us is that studies of śāstric literature (as well as *śāstra*’s own reflexivity) draw attention to *śāstra*’s textual and extra-textual features: for example, a self-justification based on the finiteness of human life and vision, an injunctive mode of expression, a concern with this-worldly matters, and a divine origin and genealogy of transmission. Another recurring, and often self-conscious feature of śāstric literature is the embedding and entextualization of other texts, or in general, intertextuality (a stated or alluded awareness of other texts).<sup>10</sup> In this essay, I will have to bypass the very interesting

---

<sup>8</sup> *Ṛgveda* 8.33.16.

<sup>9</sup> See Dwivedi 1985-86; Pollock 1989a; and Vatsyayan 1989.

<sup>10</sup> For śāstric intertextuality, see Rocher 1985, Olivelle 2004.

question of how various texts declare themselves śāstric, justify their existence or even their indispensability, or otherwise reflect on their divine origin or their regulatory purpose.

Discussions about *śāstra* among schools of philosophy (*darśanas*) in early India — from the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā to Vedānta and Nyāya Vaiśeṣika — make it clear that, despite differences in interpretation and vision, the various schools considered the Vedas to be the primordial *śāstras* that illuminated dharma. When a body of literature such as the poetry of the Vaiṣṇava Āḷvār saints (6th–9th centuries) is conferred Vedic status, or when a text like Bharata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* calls itself a “fifth Veda,” it takes on Vedic attributes of transhuman knowledge and doctrinal authority.<sup>11</sup> R.C. Dwivedi argues that, thus, a “marginal, occasional, symbolic, mythical, and dialectical relationship has always existed between the Vedas and subsequent development of śāstras.”<sup>12</sup> Brian Smith elaborates that many texts and practices that call themselves “Vedic” express this relationship through strategies of “reflection (this *is* the Veda); restatement (this is *based on* the Veda); reduction (this is the *simplified* Veda); reproduction (this *enlarges* the Veda); recapitulation (this is *condensed essence* of the Veda); and even reversal (the Veda is *based on this*).”<sup>13</sup>

### *Bhakti and Śāstra*

Although Vedāntic schools readily acknowledged bhakti (devotion) as a precondition for higher knowledge, it is in the bhakti traditions of the centuries after the Āḷvārs that one finds a range of attitudes from bold critique to conformity with regard to *śāstra*. For example, in the colloquial poetic form known as *vacana* (lit. “thing said”) of the Vīraśaiva poets from the 10th to 14th centuries, one finds a powerful critique of *śāstra* both as specific injunction

<sup>11</sup> Pollock 1985. Also, Patton 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Dwivedi 1985–86:46.

<sup>13</sup> Smith 1989:29. See also Sarma 2003; Stoker 2004.

and as normative socio-religious code. As Basava (12th century) declares: “They plunge/ wherever they see water./ They circumambulate/ every tree they see. /How can they know you/ O Lord/ who adore/ waters that run dry/ trees that wither?”<sup>14</sup> Allama Prabhu’s repudiation of convention is similarly illustrative: “The Vedas are a matter of recitation, *śāstras* a chatter of the marketplace, *purāṇas* are only a meeting of goons.”<sup>15</sup> However, the uninhibited critique of brahmanical customs that one generally finds in the *vacanas* has tended to overshadow the fact that there were Viraśaiva thinkers whose response to vedic tradition and its allied *śāstras* was more complicated than outright rejection. The 13th century Telugu Viraśaiva poet, Palkuriki Somanatha, who was staunchly antibrahmanical asserts in his *Basava Purāṇa* that he was a “scholar of the ‘four Vedas,’ and that Viraśaivism was in complete conformity with the Vedas and the *śāstras*.”<sup>16</sup> As Narayana Rao finds, the precondition of engagement with the *śāstras*, at least in the *Basava Purāṇa*, is the disacknowledgement of the custodial hold of brahmans and brahmanism over the Vedas and the *śāstras*.

The tension between censuring mechanical or pretentious enactments of *śāstra*, on the one hand, and overt allegiance to śāstric norms on the other, is vividly brought out in the poetry and hagiographies of many Vaiṣṇava bhakti saints. The *Chaitanya Charitāmṛta*, a well-known 16th century biography of the saint Chaitanya who inspired a popular Krishna-bhakti movement in the Braj region, depicts him as a keen adherent of *varṇa* (caste) and *āśrama* (life-stage) stipulations specified by the Dharmaśāstras. Just as many times, however, Chaitanya seems to transgress *varṇāśrama* dharma in the ecstasy of devotion.<sup>17</sup> This dual response to śāstric stipulation, Graham Schweig argues, is rooted in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

<sup>14</sup> Basava, vacana # 581, in Ramanujan 1973:85.

<sup>15</sup> Allama Prabhu, vacana # 465, in Nagaraj 2003:362.

<sup>16</sup> Narayana Rao 1990:7.

<sup>17</sup> Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviraja Gosvami, *Srisricaitanyacaritāmṛta*.



which validates socially-structured existence, but ultimately subjugates it to the service of Krishna; the latter being the highest dharma (*parodharma*).<sup>18</sup> Hagiographies of Mirabai, the most famous devotee of Krishna in 16th century Rajasthan point out that although she rejected the social role of *pativrata* (lit. devotion to the husband) described by the *śāstras* as incumbent on a married woman, that rejection was only relevant to the human sphere. For, as stories go, Mira believed, in the manner of the *gōpī* tradition (the cowherding girls who loved Krishna), to be already and eternally married to Krishna for whom she indeed was a *pativrata*. The autobiography and *abhangas* (eight-lined poems) of the Marathi brahman saint, Bahinabai (1628–1700), testify to her intense effort to reconcile the demands made by the *śāstras* of a woman with her desire for a life of unfettered devotion to Lord Vithala and to her guru, the poet-saint Tukaram, amidst great domestic opposition.<sup>19</sup> While Bahinabai was also frustrated by misogynist characterizations in the *śāstras* that prohibited her from following śāstric prescriptions that had salvific power, her later poetry reflects her insight that the śāstric path liberates only in the living-out of the root significance of injunctions, and not through their mechanical observance.<sup>20</sup>

### *The Dharmasūtras and the Dharmaśāstras*

Most relevant to the Sringeri context where historically the maṭha has been an interpreter of the Dharmaśāstras are the Dharmasūtra and the Dharmaśāstra texts. Perhaps no other group of *śāstra*-texts recorded and codified everyday life, especially as it pertained to the upper castes, as these treatises did. Compiled by various authors approximately between 500 B.C. and 400 A.D., they broadly address four topics spanning proper conduct (*ācāra*), expiation

<sup>18</sup> Schweig 2002.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Feldhaus 1982; also, McGee 1996a.

<sup>20</sup> For example *abhangas* #103, and 63.1, 2 in Abbott 1985 [1929].

(*prāyascitta*), business (*vyavahāra*), and governance (*rāja dharma*).<sup>21</sup> While most Dharmasūtras are lost to us now, or known only through extracts alluded to in other texts, four Dharmasūtras whose authorship is attributed to Gautama, Āpastamba, Baudhāyana, and Vasiṣṭha respectively, have been translated into English.<sup>22</sup> The only preserved Dharmaśāstras are those of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada and Parāśara.<sup>23</sup>

The antiquity, sequence, the actual location in the vedic corpus, certainty of authorship, and textual completeness of Dharmasūtra and Dharmaśāstra texts continue to be indeterminate and perplex modern scholarship. Yet, commentaries on these texts from the 7th to the 18th century do not doubt their authoritativeness, associating them with the Vedas and with sages whose knowledge was considered transcendent and irrefutable. Extraordinary in their imagination of everyday and ceremonial contexts and social categories, the *sūtras* and *śāstras* enumerate, among other things, the dharma appropriate to kings, householders, renunciators, and students, ritual procedures, dietary practices, holy pursuits, sins and their expiation, and women's roles. Aware of the ever-present possibility of breaches, these texts also specify preventive and reparatory measures.

The texts recognize that while dharma itself is a binding principle from which no one is exempt, rules are in fact knowable through particular idioms: the dharma of a region (*deśadharma*), the dharma of a group (*jātidharma*), or the dharma of the family (*kuladharma*). In an important observation increasingly shared by modern scholars of Dharmaśāstras, Patrick Olivelle notes most of the rules of behavior specified in these texts are custom-derived, and “cannot be traced to the Vedic texts. There is, then, a dissonance between the theologically correct definition and epistemol-

---

<sup>21</sup> Kane 1962–75, vol. I.1.

<sup>22</sup> Buhler 1969 [1886]; also, Olivelle 1999.

<sup>23</sup> For an overview, see Rocher 2003.

ogy of dharma and the reality of the rules of dharma encoded in the Dharmasūtras.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, it is the more immediate worlds of *ācāra*, or exemplary conduct from the lived context, and not so much the distant and awe-inspiring Vedas, that provide these texts with their normative detail.<sup>25</sup>

But it is critical to note here that the English translation of “*ācāra*” as “custom” obscures the moral clause included in the dharmaśāstric use of the term.<sup>26</sup> Not all customs were indiscriminately sponged up by the Dharmaśāstras for formulating the basis of dharma(s). For example, Āpastamba says that the authorities (*pramāṇa*) for his Dharmasūtras are twofold: (i) the agreement (*saṁaya*) of those who know the dharmas; and, (ii) the Vedas. As P.V. Kane puts it,

... just as the revealed books (Veda) and the *smṛtis* authoritatively lay down what dharma is, so also in our quest to find out what dharma is in the varying circumstances of life, the practices of those who may be called *śiṣṭas* [the virtuous; eminent] furnish us with the necessary criterion or norm, i.e. *śiṣṭācāra* [conduct of the virtuous] is the touchstone for judging whether an act in consonance with what the *śāstras* require us to do.<sup>27</sup>

The recognition of custom and convention that are ratified by learned individuals of good character is suggestive of the *śāstras*’ adaptability to, and reliance on, local environments and exigencies, but it is an adaptability that does not overturn the universal premise that dharma had to be followed in *all* cases.

We may well ask, who are these *śiṣṭas* (exemplars), from whom emanates so much moral authority? Exemplars are, according to Baudhāyana,

---

<sup>24</sup> Olivelle 1999:xxxix.

<sup>25</sup> The sources of dharmic knowledge — *śruti* [i.e. the Vedas], *smṛti* [the remembered tradition] and *ācāra* [practice; standards certified by good people] — are prioritized variously by different Dharmaśāstra authors. See Kane 1962–75, vol. 3, especially chapter 32; and Olivelle 1999, “Introduction.”

<sup>26</sup> See Davis 2004b.

<sup>27</sup> Kane 1962–75, vol. 3:826.

... those who are free from envy and pride, possess a jarful of grain, and are free from covetousness, hypocrisy, arrogance, greed, folly, and anger. As it is said, ‘Cultured people are those who have studied the Veda together with its supplements (A 2.8.10–11), in accordance with the Law [dharma], know how to draw inferences from them, and are able to adduce as proofs express Vedic texts (G 3.36 n).’<sup>28</sup>

Again, a further qualification is made: not all actions of a *śiṣṭa* are exemplary — acts that have clearly visible motives or done to secure pleasure do not qualify as authoritative means of instruction.<sup>29</sup>

The question whether, and to what extent, inscribed rules were followed in practice in earlier times is a complicated one for which we do not have clear and definite answers, and about which there is continuing debate. According to Ludo Rocher, it is extremely unlikely that the Dharmaśāstras were ever *uniformly* understood as the law of the land by Hindus or accepted and applied by *all* Hindu groups in practical jurisprudence. He argues that when the Dharmaśāstras were in fact consulted, it is likely that “in actual dispute settlement, each region or each group knew exactly the set of customs that applied to them, and they applied them consistently.”<sup>30</sup> Richard Lariviere, on the other hand, sees the “aphorisms, guidelines, and advice” found in Dharmaśāstra texts as having had practical application in that the Dharmaśāstras functioned as an authoritative resource in the administration of law.<sup>31</sup>

However, the ethnographic observations of 17th century Jesuit missionaries Roberto de Nobili,<sup>32</sup> and Jean Venant Bouchet<sup>33</sup> in Madurai and Pondicherry suggest something important at least in the context of legal practice: pre-colonial Hindu legal systems drew

---

<sup>28</sup> In Baudhāyana *Dharmasūtra*, 1.1.5–6 in Olivelle 1999:132. “A 2.8.10–11” is Āpastamba, and “G 3.36 n” refers to Gautama.

<sup>29</sup> See Manu 2.17–18. Reference from Kane 1962–75, vol. 3, chapter 32.

<sup>30</sup> Rocher 1993:267.

<sup>31</sup> Lariviere 2004 [1997].

<sup>32</sup> de Nobili 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Rocher 1984.

upon plural and multiple sources that included not only inscribed sources of dharma (the Dharmaśāstras, palm leaf records, and so on) but also orally-circulating, memorized customs which adapted “knowledge” to “situation.” Examining legal practice between the 14th and the 18th centuries in Kerala, Donald Davis persuasively demonstrates that legal practice was founded on the concept of regionally-based boundaries of propriety, *deśamaryāda* (also understood as *ācāra*, exemplary conduct, “community standard”). *Deśamaryāda* was itself a combination of (1) “dharmaśāstra literature, whether or not it was consciously appropriated as such,” (2) legal practices possibly external to this literature but prevalent in the region having been established perhaps through “community interaction” and “political intervention” and (3) customs particular to those patronized in the “semi-autonomous political territory” called Trikkandiyur sanketam whose legal locus was a prominent Nambudiri brahman family.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Sringeri Maṭha and the Dharmaśāstras*

The Sringeri maṭha, an influential interpreter of the Dharmaśāstras, used to function as an independent judiciary with its own court [*cāvaḍi*] before the abolition of the jāgirdāri (land-grant state) in 1958.<sup>35</sup> Numerous cases documented in the *kaḍitas* [ledgers] of the maṭha show that individuals from a wide variety of castes consulted the maṭha about matters such as marriage alliances, adoption, ostracization, property settlement, and daily Hindu ritual. Many times, village-level forums comprising elders worked closely with the maṭha in resolving disputes.<sup>36</sup> Disputes of a social or economic nature were first taken to the panchayat, the local body of village elders and elites, while caste matters were handled by a *jāti*

<sup>34</sup> Davis 1999:162. Also see Davis 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Shastry 1982:67–68.

<sup>36</sup> Gnanambal 1973.

or caste panchayat.<sup>37</sup> K. Gnanambal finds in her study of various maṭhas in south India that generally maṭhas specified adjudicatory procedures for village panchayats, and the panchayats deferred to the decisions of the maṭha. Case records reveal complex and varied negotiations between individuals, panchayat authorities, and maṭha authorities.

Giridhara Shastry, administrator of the maṭha in the 1980s and now a lecturer in English in Sringeri, explained that before 1958, the maṭha used to have a *śāstra*-interpreting department that was headed by an expert in the Dharmaśāstras, who was known as the *dharmādhikāri* (official interpreter of the *śāstras*).

But it was not enough for the *dharmādhikāri* to be learned in the *śāstras* and be competent in *Mīmāṃsā* techniques of interpretation. The scholar was required to bring a *humane understanding* to the interpretation of the Dharmaśāstras, of being able to interpret them in *the context of the times*. Basically, the interpreter had to ask: What difficulties does that person [whose case is being considered] face? What śāstric decisions can that person abide by? For instance, while elaborating on certain rules of conduct, or while recommending certain reparations, the interpreter would have to consider the character and capabilities of the person. . . . The *dharmādhikāri* also often cleared doubts [about customs or conduct] that people would bring to him. There were times when matters could not be resolved by the *dharmādhikāri* — for example, when two parties were in dispute, and one party felt that the *dharmādhikāri*'s resolution was unsatisfactory, they would take it to the guru. Then debates would follow . . . , different pandits and experts would be called in — it was virtually a court. Then a decision would be reached. In Sringeri, most of the time, however, these matters would be sorted out by the *dharmādhikāri*.<sup>38</sup>

Such contextual interpretation by the *dharmādhikāri* would seem to be at odds with the position taken by the spiritual heads of the maṭha who maintained that their duty was *not* to adjust the *śāstras* to changing times but to inform people about what the *śāstras* say.

---

<sup>37</sup> Gnanambal 1973 finds that this is true of a wide spectrum of maṭhas across Smārta, Śrivaishṇava, Śaiva, and Viraśaiva orientations in south India.

<sup>38</sup> Tape-recorded conversation, Sringeri, May 2004.

Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Swami, the spiritual head of the maṭha from 1954 to 1989, explains carefully that the *śāstras themselves* offer alternatives when their injunctions cannot be observed and make provisions for extenuating circumstances. However, *śāstras* also set limits are on how flexible they can be.<sup>39</sup> The *dharmad-hikari's* interpretations are set within these bounds and additionally take into account regional, caste, and family-based tradition.

Today, śāstric counsel is given by a maṭha-appointed pandit who is selected for his erudition in the Dharmaśāstras, sensitivity, and worldly wisdom. Vinayaka Udupa, the current appointee, said that letters seeking advice continue to pour in from Hindus of all groups. After he studies each case, occasionally consulting other pandits, he formulates his advice, and forwards the decision to the guru before conveying it to the enquirer. Given the many Dharmaśāstras and the numerous communities whose customs vary, the maṭha consults the appropriate Dharmaśāstra or Dharmasūtra: for instance, *Āśvalāyana Gr̥hyasūtra* for Ṛgvedis, *Āpastamba* for Yajurvedis, or *Hiranyakēṣi* for Citpavan brahmans.<sup>40</sup> For questions relevant to all Hindus — for example, on which day ought one to observe a fast when *ekādaśī*<sup>41</sup> falls on two consecutive days — the maṭha consults digests (for example, Kāśinātha's *Dharmasindhu* (1790–91), Kamalākara's *Nirṇayasindhu* (1612), or Vaidyanātha's *Dikṣitīyam* (17th century)) which are based on *smṛti* texts. Even here, the interpretation is contextual. The maṭha gives considerable weight to the customs and the contextual particularities of family and region. For instance, a letter in its records advises an enquirer that a particular marriage alliance be decided based on “*deśācāra*” (conduct considered appropriate in the region).<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> *Divine Discourses* (1994).

<sup>40</sup> The terms “Ṛgvedi”, “Yajurvedi” “Sāmavedi” and “Atharvavedi” refer to families which trace their ancestry to one of the seers associated with the Veda in question.

<sup>41</sup> 11th day of the lunar fortnight, considered auspicious for fasting and prayer.

<sup>42</sup> Gnanambal 1973:59.

The adjudicating reach of the maṭha, however, became circumscribed with the introduction of colonial institutions and processes such as Anglo-Indian court systems and litigation,<sup>43</sup> the involvement of the princely state of Mysore in the maṭha's administrative structure (for instance, deputing an officer-in-charge who supervised the administrative operations of the maṭha), and the loss of the status of a land-grant state by the maṭha in 1958. While the colonial administration itself does not seem to have directly interfered in the maṭha's role as dharmaśāstra-interpreting entity, or question its moral stature in the region, largely content with keeping a watchful eye on its revenues, Giridhara Shastry pointed out that nevertheless, "colonial policy is one of the major causes for the decline in the influence of the maṭha in 'secular' matters."<sup>44</sup> That is, today, problems relating to land, property, divorce and so on are necessarily taken to court systems, while in the past, these would have fallen within the maṭha's jurisdiction.<sup>45</sup> The introduction of new systems of education, the spread of English literacy, and the establishment of bodies such as cooperative societies and municipal councils eroded the judicial centrality of the maṭha in *all* matters. It is ironic, added Giridhara Shastry, that the maṭha itself took the lead in establishing these schools, hospital, banks, and the cooperative society.

Summing up the transformations effected on the relationship of *śāstra* and Hindu society during colonial rule, Rajeev Dhavan observes that the custodianship over *śāstra* gradually shifted from diffused

---

<sup>43</sup> The Dharmaśāstras saw dramatic deployment in British colonial legal policy, and there were extremely complicated debates and controversies surrounding various phases of the establishment of an Anglo Indian judicial system beginning with its inception by Warren Hastings in 1772. For a fuller review of this history that has been the subject of substantial scholarship, see Prasad (forthcoming 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Giridhara Shastry, via e-mail, February 2005.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed religio-legal history of the Sringeri matha, see Gnanambal 1973; Row 1927; Shastry 1982.



structures of local authority to the state, and the attention of commentators shifted from interpreting the *śāstras* themselves to how *Anglo-Indian courts* would interpret the *śāstras* (making *śāstra* more litigation centered, and sidestepping traditional methods of regulating the interpretation of *śāstra* through *Mīmāṃsā* hermeneutics and *sadācāra*, for example).<sup>46</sup> Yet, Dhavan concludes, and I am inclined to agree, that contemporary Hindu contexts suggest that while colonial intervention was significantly disruptive in formal jurisprudence, it failed to unsettle the more day-to-day beliefs and practices that engage the notion of *śāstra* in Hindu social and ritual life where *śāstric* discourse is considered important.

### *Sringeri Conversations and Expressions of the Normative*

A conversation I had in May of 1995 with Nagalakshmi, the daughter-in-law of one of the oldest families in and around Sringeri, was an illuminating experience in my exploration of *śāstra*. I was visiting their home in Halanduru, about five miles from Sringeri, where I often stayed for a day or two before returning to my apartment in the town of Sringeri. As I helped Nagalakshmi with kitchen-work, our talk turned toward foodways, and she elaborately described everyday, festive, and seasonal cuisine of the region. Not having this specific cultural knowledge, I sought recipes, but she soon reminded me, “To learn our *adige paddhati* [ways of cooking], a whole year is what you need. Stay here for one year. This coming in the morning, leaving in the evening, won’t do!” She continued, “But you can’t merely listen and then go and cook that dish! You learn the *paddhati* [ways] only when you observe somebody make that dish.”<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Dhavan 1992. For the impact on modern Indian judiciary, see also Lariviere 1989.

<sup>47</sup> Conversations I present in this essay were in Kannada, occasionally interspersed with English; in general, all italicized words are transliterated as heard, my explanations are in parentheses, and literal meanings are in square brackets.

When I asked her how she had learned to cook, she said, “By observing! One learns by observing others. There’s no such thing as formal teaching. Sometimes a mother may instruct her daughter, now do this, or do that. Or we also watch while helping somebody make this or that. Or when there’s some *function*, one gets to observe *adige bhattru* (male brahman cooks) — and watch how they cook.” She added, “Some have the *knack*. Not everybody is able to bring out the taste and *ruci* [flavor]. And there are some, who, no matter how much they observe, are stuck in one *type* of cooking, in their own thing. They just don’t have it.”

Food-talk, ubiquitous in Indian life, was not new to me, but the Malnad region’s foodways were. Nagalakshmi and I had talked about what foods were or were not auspicious for which ritual occasions, methods of cooking that were appropriate for specific foods, regional variations, ingredients that worked as ‘substitutes,’ reparations, combinations for nutritious foods, season-oriented menus, and medicinal foods, such as those for pregnant women. It was clear why it would take a full year, indeed even many, to acquire such knowledge, founded as it was on observation, experience, informal modes of transmission, and a capacity to grasp and innovate, a *knack*, to use Nagalakshmi’s term.

As I consider how I processed the general idiom of this conversation (and many like it), A.K. Ramanujan’s ruminations about the context-sensitivity of Hindu life are worth returning to:

Such a pervasive emphasis on context is, I think, related to the Hindu concern with *jati* — the logic of classes, of genera — and species, of which human jatis [classes] are only an instance. Various taxonomies of season, landscape, times, gunas or qualities (and their material bases), tastes, characters, emotions, essences (*rasa*), etc., are basic to the thought-work of Hindu medicine and poetry, cooking and religion, erotics and magic. Each *jati* or class defines a context, a structure of relevance, a rule of permissible combination, a frame of reference, a meta-communication of what is and can be done.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Ramanujan 1989:53.

Food and its social life is a long-favored subject of Indian thinking. From the *Ṛgveda* onwards, prescriptive, taxonomic, and narrative texts abound with theorization about the moral qualities, sacred potential, and the medicinal properties of foods.<sup>49</sup> One hears of the legendary culinary skills of Nala and Bhima of the Mahabharata, and one also encounters scores of folktales and stories from the Purāṇas that play with food-motifs. The term *pāka-śāstra* (or *sūpa-śāstra*) tells us that there may have been treatises on cooking, but an actual text that informs daily practice remains elusive.<sup>50</sup> Even though written texts may well be lost, we can still ask what the absence of an exclusive codified written textual tradition about cooking tells us. One can speculate that food, acknowledged as important, was nevertheless considered secondary to the recognized this-worldly goals of life (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*) but this is improbable considering the pivotal role of food in the Hindu experience of the sacred. It is more likely that because the subject of food is so important that it was incorporated into a wide array of śāstric texts that dealt with other domains of life (such as the Dharma-śāstras or Āyurvedic compendia). The regionality of food traditions may also have contributed to the lack of pan-regional śāstric discourse on foodways.

However, my conversation with Nagalakshmi (considerably abbreviated here for lack of space) showed that, despite all the existing cookbooks of past and present, to learn a *paddhati* or mode of cooking, one has to rely on a wide range of seeing-and-doing orientations concerning food that are integrated into daily living. I had never imagined when I recorded this conversation that it would say something to me years later about the imperceptible

---

<sup>49</sup> For an excellent and thorough overview article on food in Hindu thinking, see Khare 2004; also Khare and Rao 1986; and Achaya 1994.

<sup>50</sup> See Bhattacharya and Tripathi 1983 [1915]. A few 19th and early 20th century books bear “*pāka śāstra*” in their titles. For example, Saraswate Boy 1836. This discussion excludes the prolific genre of modern-day recipe-oriented cookbooks.

and deeply dialogic ways in which śāstric discourse manifests itself not only in everyday Sringeri life, but also in Hindu life in general. Put in terms of a question, how does one learn what one learns about “rules” and “ways” of being Hindu, in all its varieties? Distinctly injunctive in parts, normative in import, and grounded in a flexibly-understood local (regional, seasonal, familial and so on) that was connected to the translocal (auspiciousness, well-being), the knowledge that Nagalakshmi shared with me could well be called “śāstric” but we did not use that term. Instead, the word that Nagalakshmi and I had used throughout our conversation was *paddhati*; way or custom. How do these terms engage with each other?

Three other terms, *sampradāya*, *ācāra*, and *niyama* in fact also entered such conversations, and these five terms (*śāstra*, *sampradāya*, *paddhati*, *ācāra*, and *niyama*) frequently strolled into each other’s realms. The seemingly synonymous use of these terms in conversation makes it tempting to conclude that *śāstra* is simply the same as these other terms. And indeed, the overlap in the denotations is not merely a sleight of translation across languages, but is often confirmed by usage. The sibling nature of these words is apparent if we look up Kittel’s Kannada-English dictionary:

1. *śāstra*: (also in Sanskrit) “order;” “command;” “precept;” “rule or compendium of rules;” “religious or scientific treatise;” “law-book.”
2. *paddhati* = “way;” “path;” “manner;” “usage;” and “custom.” Monier Williams’ Sanskrit-English dictionary glosses *paddhati* as “way,” “path” and additionally as “guidebooks or manuals for particular rites and ceremonies.”
3. *sampradāya* = “giving, bestowing;” “tradition, established doctrine transmitted from one teacher to another,” “traditional belief;” “custom, usage.”
4. *ācāra* = “conduct;” “manner of action;” “good behavior;” “custom, usage, practice.”
5. *niyama* = “restraining, restriction;” “fixed rule;” “agreement, contract;” “any self-imposed restraint or religious observance

voluntarily practiced, as fasting, watching [?], pilgrimage, praying etc.”

For Chayamma (in her late seventies in 2004), another Sringeri resident and longtime family friend, *śāstra* principally meant,

What we’ve come doing from the past . . . Now, your mother does something and you later remember that she used to do things this way, and you do it the same way, thinking this itself is my *śāstra*, my *sampradāya*. If somebody tells you, ‘This is not the way to do it,’ you say, ‘This is how my mother used to do it. This is what *she* said was the *śāstra*, the *sampradāya*.’

Why indeed is it important to recognize and nourish this connection between observation, memory, and action, and to do enough to sustain it in the next generation? As one dwells on this question, beyond the detail of whether to use *parijāta* flowers for a *pūjā* or whether to wear the auspicious green sari for an event, one realizes that the connection clarifies the deeper question “Who am I?” and the “Who I am” can be answered in relation to the presences before, around, and after. Actions or words of elders (or of members of a community), acts of remembering, and enactments constitute *sampradāya*, and so strong is the generationally-transmitted *sampradāya* (the giving, the given, a *tradition*) that it is possible to say, “this itself is my *śāstra*, my *sampradāya*.”

The term *sampradāya* enjoys a high place in several areas of Hindu life, from schools of philosophy to music and the fine arts where it refers to a specific “teaching tradition” (a philosophical orientation or a mode of practice) orally passed down from teacher to student.<sup>51</sup> Śaṅkara, emphasizing “correct tradition”, says that despite

---

<sup>51</sup> A related term is *parampara*, “succession; lineage” which refers to a specific preceptorial line in a particular school of thought. The Sringeri *guru parampara* is the succession of gurus of the Sringeri matha beginning with Śaṅkara. These gurus belong to the monastic order known as *daśanāmi sampradāya*, an order in which the names of ascetics bear one of ten suffixes (*daśanāmi* = “ten names”). It is important to note that “*parampara*” (preceptorial line) and *sampradāya* (tradition) are used interchangeably. See Cenknier 1983.

expertise in all branches of *śāstra*, one who does not know *sampradāya* is to be dismissed as a fool. According to Śaṅkara, the “correct tradition” has as much authority as the written *śāstra* because it too takes root in the Vedas which can be interpreted and transmitted only by a guru.<sup>52</sup> The teacher becomes the embodiment of knowledge that is considered sacrosanct, and thus *sampradāya*, “tradition,” bears the authority to clarify and provide direction in the application of knowledge. In the contemporary male martial arts practice of Kerala called *Kalarippayattu*, Phillip Zarrilli finds that a student’s knowledge can be considered complete only when he has fully engaged with the art: has received guidance from a living guru, has mastered lineage-maintained manuals of practice, and has come to embody the art itself.<sup>53</sup> It seems to me that *śāstra* is understood here, not as a singular manual with an end point, but as a physical and spiritual *continuum*. The process of transmission from teacher to student secures for this continuum a perpetual reverence in the community.

The deeper relationships of self, other, and community that underlie *śāstra* and *sampradāya* (and their cognates) also make them the site of conflict and anxiety. For example, friction in marriage alliances across boundaries of caste, race, gender, or religion frequently centers on constructs of *śāstra* — or more broadly, on a normative stage that is also crowded with material and social inequities. The moral leverage of *śāstra* also hovers over the day-to-day jostling for personal spaces and expression. For many women especially, self-expression and familial identifications are recurrently challenged at the crossroads of the in-law home and the maternal family. Giridhara Shastry’s eighty-four year old mother, called Ajji (Kannada for “Grandmother”) observed,

*Śāstra* and *paddhati* are basically the same [*ella onde*]. But we make up differences, and arrogantly use those over daughters-in-law and over children.

---

<sup>52</sup> Ramachandra Rao 1979:2–3.

<sup>53</sup> Zarrilli 1989.

Isn't this true? And if there are many daughters-in-law in the family, then there are more opportunities for domineering (*jōr māḍakke avakāśa*): 'This one has not done *maḍi*<sup>54</sup> right, that one touched clothes reserved for *maḍi*, and so on.' Differences are invented only to enforce rules.

In many of the in-law stories that women shared with me — reasons of confidentiality prevent me from providing specifics — *śāstra* or *paddhati* or one of their cultural cognates were used to exert authority and control.

At the same time, looking closely, the day-to-day lives of women also speak eloquently to the ways in which women creatively weave *paddhatis* of maternal homes with practices of in-law homes. Local environments provide another rich resource of cultural knowledge about the "ought to." Another woman explained how she figured out "what the *śāstras* said" after she got married and came to live in Sringeri from the *bayalū sīmē* (plains) region: "[It was] my mother's *paddhati*(s)! . . . My daughters, like you, think, 'Oh Amma [mother] used to do things this way.'" "But did the *sampradāya* of your husband's family change this?" I wondered. "No, it is mostly my mother's; *śāstra* is usually what our parents pass on to us, isn't it? When I saw that things were done a little differently around here, I asked people, and started following Sringeri's *paddhatis*." She cited the *Tulsi pūje* [worship of the basil plant] popular in the Sringeri-Malnad region not observed in her maternal family. The "asking around" about local ways of life conveys many things: an attempt to understand cultural difference, a willingness to incorporate into one's habitual practices something that is external, and the desire to belong — all greatly enabled by knowing that worshipping the sacred plant could only promote well-being.

For Ajji too, worship of the Tulsi had become a necessary part of her daily life. When I asked her who had taught her this *paddhati* or that, Ajji's surprised answer was "What is there to teach?"

---

<sup>54</sup> *Maḍi* is the physical sanctification of the body and environment for ritual purposes.

It's all there in the family." Hers had been a childhood especially vivified by a large joint family, but her response nonetheless reminds us of the osmotic ways in which one, growing up in a Hindu family, learns traditions, practices, and ways of being that are saturated with the sense of "this is auspicious, this is correct, this is ethical." A.K. Ramanujan aptly observed that in India, one never hears the Rāmāyaṇa for "the first time;" one simply encounters it continually and episodically,<sup>55</sup> and so one's empathies, possibly changing, with the moral characterizations in the story are spread over and stretched across a lifetime, in many domains. The subliminal imbibing of śāstric knowledge similarly is continuous: "All my daughters do this everyday — they should have a bath, wear clean washed clothes, do the *Tulsi puje* rightaway and then do other things; this is what I taught them. To be physically and spiritually clean. I did not tell them all 'this is *śāstra*', I said this was '*niyama*' [voluntary restraint]." While some of the practices Ajji taught her daughters are in fact Dharmaśāstra-endorsed (i.e. the exhortation to be physically and spiritually clean), her choice to frame these practices as voluntary observances confers upon them a moral immediacy that is perhaps even more persuasive than when it is mandated by a distant *śāstra*.

As Ajji and I talked about various challenges that one faced in the modern world with the choices one makes or has to make, she was critical of an application of *śāstra* that was immune to humane considerations. Using *ācāra* and *śāstra* synonymously, she said, "When girls have their monthly periods, to isolate them in other rooms is basically torturing them."<sup>56</sup> Is that *ācāra* (proper conduct)? We don't

---

<sup>55</sup> Ramanujan 1991:46.

<sup>56</sup> For dharmaśāstric prescriptions on this subject, see Kane 1962–75, vol. 2.2:803–5. In accordance with the belief that a sacred space must not be made impure by bodily wastes, a menstruating woman keeps away for a few days from worship and cooking spaces, and does not attend ceremonial events. The practice is known by wide variation, but many Hindu families have rejected it or are simply indifferent to its observance.



do that in our family. That doesn't mean that they can go everywhere in the house; they cannot enter the kitchen or the *pūjā* room. What can you do when you live in cities or even in America like you do? Can you cloister yourself in a room? Do the best you can." An idea I encountered often in Sringeri, and in other contexts of my life, was that the yardstick for correct observance of *śāstra* is a "sense of fulfillment" [*manas tr̥pti*]. Many persons agree, to quote Vijaya Krishnamurthy, "One does what one's capacity allows one to do, to keep up the *ācāra* (proper conduct) you've learned from your parents in whatever measure, and the satisfaction comes from the knowledge that you've done your best. One shouldn't let it go altogether."

Does *śāstra* then largely designate the impersonal realm of the stipulated, the grand imperative, while observances (vows and fasts) and duties fill the space of the personalized, the voluntary, the everyday? Notwithstanding that actual *śāstric* codification often includes detail that one could classify as "observances," Ajji voiced a perception I had heard from others that *śāstra* concerns broad principles: "Treat everybody alike; do not disparage anyone; do not say 'Don't come here, don't touch this or that.'" Ajji's understanding of *śāstra*, it would seem, blends with her sense of duty, the broad guideline finding expression in specific daily acts that she identified as her duties and observances — which ranged from washing the doorstep early in the morning, drawing floor designs (*rangoli*), and fetching flowers, to maintaining physical and spiritual cleanliness and being considerate toward others. Although Ajji saw the essence of *śāstric* teaching as affirming humanistic values, she also recognized *śāstra* as legislating specific ritual activity like *srāddha* (annual 'feeding' of ancestors, *pitr*). And yet, human discretion holds up spaces in which negotiations can occur: "The *pūjā* place and the kitchen, here *we* have the freedom [*namma svatantra*]. Once the daily *pūjē* and the *naivedya* are done, I don't object to whoever comes into these rooms,"<sup>57</sup> Ajji said. Her

---

<sup>57</sup> The kitchen is where the daily *naivedya* (food offering) for the *pūjā*

emphasis on *our* freedom also identifies the agency one could activate to draw up rules and obligations that are family, event, or activity-centric.

Panduranga, editor of a popular local newspaper, elaborated on the differences he perceived between *śāstra* and *sampradāya*, pointing out that “What it comes down to is ‘rule’ versus ‘act.’ According to Panduranga, for example, if one considers the commonly-known stipulation about whether meals ought to be prepared before one has eaten breakfast (because meals are first offered to deities),

there’s no *rule* about this; some family’s *sampradāya* will allow one to eat before one prepares the main meal, and some other family’s *sampradāya* will not. But at some level, people are not able to distinguish between *rules* and *acts*, so they say everything is *śāstra*. ‘That’s said in the *śāstras*,’ they say. *Śāstras* only give us *broad* guidelines, they tell us how to live. What broad directions should you follow in your life? . . . ‘Follow dharma’ is a stipulation that *śāstra* makes. And what does dharma tell you, ‘Be a good student,’ ‘Take good care of your parents.’ Now *sampradāya* can modify this, add details.

In an implicit demonstration of the fluidity between terms, Panduranga said, “When you modify *śāstra* for a *context*, it becomes *sampradāya*” and proceeded to tell me a story about, as he put it, “a *paddhati*.”

In this area, there was a household where daily *pūjās* would take place. A bowl of milk would be set for use in the *pūjā*. But the house cat would inevitably drink up the milk. So it became a pattern: that everyday, this man who sat down for the *pūjā* would ask the person who brought the milk to tie up the cat. Time went by, and in the next *generation*, it came to be that the daily *pūjā* was given up. Still, they invented the *paddhati* of tying up a cat when they went to do the *namaskāra*. Then it happened that some successive generation did not have a cat at all. Do you know what they did? They started to *maintain* a pillar to which a cat could be tied. [L, laughing: oh no!] So today if you ask what is in their *paddhati* or in their *sampradāya*, a pil-

---

(worship) is made, and hence, like the *pūjā* room, is kept constantly clean and sanctified.

lar has to be built when they construct a house. If you ask why, the answer you get is, it's the cat-tying-pillar. This has become a *sampradāya*!<sup>58</sup> [Everyone who overhears this story laughs.] When the younger generations ask, what is the meaning of this, or that, it's hard to explain. The meaning is hidden, in the past. Often when we are unable to give a reason for doing something the way we do it, we say, this is *śāstra*.<sup>59</sup>

Panduranga's cat story highlights that a *paddhati* (custom), with no śāstric precedent, initiated by a person of suitable authority like an elder in the family, could develop into a family's *sampradāya*. The story also has a facetious and self-critical edge to it, both in its content and in its telling: Its ironic content suggests that not all practices, even if they are part of *sampradāya*, are śāstric, while the telling gently draws attention to the point that if one tried too hard to exhume chronologies and "meanings" for every norm, one could end up with anti-climactic origins-of-norms stories. Later in the conversation, Panduranga elaborated that śāstric prescriptions are broadly applicable to ritual conduct (*ācāra-vicāra*). Interestingly, however, he identified *some* ritual practices as belonging to the province of *sampradāya*. For instance, despite extensive dharmaśāstric and purāṇic textual discourse about the *vrata* tradition, he situated the locally-popular *mangala gouri vrata*, the ritual fast observed in honor of the goddess Gouri as a Malnad *sampradāya*, acknowledging that a *sampradāya* provides social and historical contexts of the tradition that the Purāṇas and *śāstras* may not yield.

Panduranga's thinking is in remarkable conversation with Wittgenstein, agreeing with it and complicating it, the crucial difference being the dharmic tenor of Panduranga's vocabulary. Wittgenstein argues that it is *practice*, or *usage*, which reveals how individuals conceptualize a word or a rule, and usage reflects the ability to

---

<sup>58</sup> For variants of "sastra" stories relating to cats, see Prasad (forthcoming 2006). Also see Parry 1994:193.

<sup>59</sup> Panduranga, May 2004. I provide fuller transcripts and analyses of conversations in my forthcoming book (see note above).

participate in “a form of life”, the extended network of extra-linguistic cultural activities shared by a community. Acquiring this ability enables an individual to engage in a variety of “language games” that range from translation and storytelling to practical mathematics.<sup>60</sup> A philosophy of language begins then, not with a systematized body of rules about syntax and semantics, but in the unraveling of a “lived” grammar that underlies our concepts and one that yields a sense of the connections, expressible and inexpressible, that individuals make: what patterns of language-use can be gleaned from the ways in which individuals extrapolate, verify, contextually apply, explicitly instruct, or illustrate a rule?

From this perspective, the complication in unraveling a grammar of the concept of *śāstra*, is that *śāstra*, a normative body [that Panduranga identifies as “rules”] that claims divine origin, sinuously interacts with *sampradāya*, also a normative, loosely-defined body characterized by practices [“acts”]. In Panduranga’s view, exemplified by Chayamma, Vijaya and Ajji’s observations, this sinuous interaction makes it difficult — even redundant — to differentiate between *śāstra* and *sampradāya*. At the same time, Panduranga preliminarily finds it useful to distinguish between *śāstra* and *sampradāya* as “rule” and “act,” a distinction that helps him accentuate their contours and some of the ways in which they relate to each other. First, like Ajji, he notes that “*śāstras* only give us broad guidelines” for life which can be modified by *sampradāya*, the field of enactment. If *śāstra* advises, “take care of one’s parents,” then a family *sampradāya* could regulate ways to express this care. But Panduranga’s comment that “at some level, people are not able to distinguish between *rules* and *acts*, so they say everything is *śāstra*” provokes us to ask *how* it is that one could “confuse” a rule with an action. It seems to me that the “confusion” in fact requires that we reconsider normative sources for actions.

---

<sup>60</sup> Wittgenstein, *PI*, #23.

While *śāstra* is recognized as a body of conceptual rules — what Pollock calls “theory” — that presents itself as orienting our ways of being and doing, *sampradāya* too functions as a body of rules, except in the crucial detail that rules of *sampradāya* are engendered through practice (and therefore bring with them a dynamism characteristic of lived situations) and bear the imprint of region, family, profession and so on. Rules are thus derived from rule-bodies (*śāstra*), and also from rule-following (*sampradāya*), and *both* address dharma. The unbounded interplay of interpretation, contexts, and discernment, and the non-articulated sense (“intuition”) that underlies the observance of śāstric rules make it impossible to situate precisely a śāstric stipulation in the world of practice. It is not a “blind” observance of rules; on the contrary, the rule-following is justified by “agreement” that is expressed not merely in opinions but “. . . in form of life.”<sup>61</sup>

For Panduranga, as for Wittgenstein, the continuity between rules, whether *śāstra*- or *sampradāya*-derived, and seemingly related acts is a continuity that can be interrupted, meandering, or as Panduranga especially underscores, even hypothetical.<sup>62</sup> In day-to-day contexts, it is useful to come back to Chayamma’s statement, “this is my *śāstra*, this is my *sampradāya*” to understand both, how from observing or performing an action, it is extremely difficult to say whether the action is impelled by *śāstra* or by *sampradāya* — a combination of both, or indeed neither. Despite the fact that a rule may be defined with some precision in the *śāstras* or in the *sampradāya* (or any normative body), its meaning emerges in the practice itself; indeed, the connection of an enactment to a rule that governs it is at times enunciated primarily in the rhetoric that argues for it as in the often-invoked phrase, “The *śāstras* say . . .” That we can justify a practice, or seek exemption altogether from explanation for an act, by citing “*śāstra*” (that is,

---

<sup>61</sup> Wittgenstein, *PI*, #219, 241.

<sup>62</sup> Wittgenstein, *PI*, #82–85.

we do something simply because the *śāstra* requires it) indicates, however, that intrinsic unquestionable authority is attached to the notion of *śāstra*.

Also, the citing of “*śāstra*” as an “explanation” for an act evokes the vast sense of the *adr̥ṣṭa* (unseen) that infuses our lives, a sense of the Mimāṃsakās argued gave vedic injunctions their transcendent authority. The phrase “the *śāstras* say” may be treated as a variant on Wittgenstein: “If I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say, “This is simply what I do.”<sup>63</sup> Or, as Chayamma said, “this is how my mother did it.” The phrase seems to call an end to the project of meaning-seeking. To my question about how Sringeri residents proceed when in doubt about śāstric prescription (Wittgenstein’s “how to go on”), Panduranga situated this problem of knowledge and action to a known socio-historical context. As Panduranga said, “In the past, they used to ask elders . . . [and] people used to act in ways appropriate to those times.” Nevertheless, the interpretative process can be fraught with doubt, misunderstanding, or non-comprehension. For after all, says Wittgenstein, “A rule stands there like a sign-post. — Does the sign-post leave no doubt open about the way I have to go? Does it shew which direction I am to take when I have passed it; whether along the road or the footpath or cross-country? . . . Or rather: [the rule] sometimes leaves room for doubt and sometimes not.”<sup>64</sup>

As specific as the codified *śāstras* may be in their imagination of potential circumstances, the limitlessly manifesting complexities of human life ultimately outpace śāstric breadth and specificity. Individuals, aware of this, constantly assess, extrapolate, disregard, or improvise śāstric rules according to their relevance and resources, engaging in an intriguing process that does not disturb *theoretically* the intrinsic immutability associated with śāstric

---

<sup>63</sup> Wittgenstein, *PI*, #217.

<sup>64</sup> Wittgenstein, *PI*, #85.

knowledge (considered to be of divine origin), but witnesses continually the adaptation of *śāstra* in practice. The validation of *sampradāya* as moral resource is hardly idiosyncratic. Giridhara Shastri, noting *sampradāya*'s authority, said, "There are times when *sampradāya* is *prabala* [predominant]." For example, he added, "the *śāstra* says that on the day of a *śrāddha*, the hosts must feed a brahman. The *śāstra* does not specify that one must only feed a Kamme brahman or a Shivalli brahman,<sup>65</sup> and yet, family *sampradāyas* insist on maintaining and implementing such non-śāstric clauses."

S.S. Janaki notes that as far back as the 13th century, Sarangadeva asserted that in the performing arts, *sampradāya* was as authoritative as *śāstra*.<sup>66</sup> The *Nāṭyaśāstra* itself, often, after laying out elaborate rules and principles of dramaturgy, adds, "these can be changed according to the needs of time and place."<sup>67</sup> The fifteen-century commentator Kallinātha clarifies that *sampradāya* authorizes the teacher to deviate from the stipulated gesture in the *śāstra*, as long as the improvisation can be justified as coming from *some other part* of that *śāstra*.<sup>68</sup>

Even within the maṭha, the normative power of *sampradāya* is illustrated by the following anecdote narrated to me by a N.S. Lakshminarasimha Murthy ("Dodda Murthy"), a retired school-teacher (in his early eighties in 2005):

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University, once invited the 33rd guru Śivabhinava Narasimha Bharati [1879–1912] to Varanasi with a two-week notice of an event. When the guru responded that the *pallaki* [palanquin] would take much longer to get to Varanasi, Malaviya assured him that instead of a *pallaki*, he would arrange a car to take the guru to Varanasi and bring him back. The guru replied, 'It is all very fine, but this car . . . I do not know of a *sampradāya* in which previous *gurugaḷu* [gurus]

---

<sup>65</sup> Brahman subsects.

<sup>66</sup> Janaki 1992:206.

<sup>67</sup> Vatsyayan 1996:38.

<sup>68</sup> Janaki 1992:207; see also Cenknner 1983.

have traveled by car. I am not saying that it contradicts our *śāstra*, but we simply don't have the *sampradāya*. I do not wish to start a *sampradāya* that has not existed before. . . . I will send my blessings from Sringeri.' In the end, his *pāduka* [wooden sandals] were sent to Varanasi.<sup>69</sup>

Such oral accounts in Sringeri of the maṭha's normative authority unsettle the assumption that the maṭha's normative voice is monologic and unified, an assumption that one could make if one heard only the adjudicating voice of case records. In this anecdote, for a practice to be permissible, the sanction of the Dharmaśāstras alone is not enough; the greater ratification must also come from *sampradāya*. The Dharmaśāstra, while regulating modes of transportation for *sannyāsis*, itself may permit some leeway, so why did the guru not want to start a *sampradāya*? Was the guru's decision not to travel by car a negation of innovation? Perhaps. But other episodes associated with the same guru depict him as one the most path-breaking gurus of the Sringeri *parampara*, who, in at least two cases, reversed long-standing traditions of ostracization maintained by local brahman subsects. The refusal of the car to Varanasi thus may not have been because of a reluctance to start or halt a *sampradāya*. The reluctance may have come from the fact that the use of a car would have signaled the admittance of a personal luxury, antithetical to the very institution of *sannyāsa*, and also countered the ideal of *śiṣṭa*, an exemplar. Not only was the car an index of luxury, but it was also then a "foreign" item, alien to Indian ways.

Jonathan Parry reports an interesting parallel in the performance of *śrāddha* rites in Varanasi. A priest who had been performing death rites according to the customarily-followed printed *paddhati* manuals on one occasion changed the ritual procedure to conform to those laid down in a śāstric treatise. When Parry discussed this, the priest's brother (also a priest) repudiated the śāstric procedure as unnecessary "innovation" in the customary practice, saying, "In my whole life, I have only performed two or three *shraddhs*

---

<sup>69</sup> Dodda Murthy, oral communication, 1994.



according to the *Shastras*. I emphasize *lokachar* [the popular tradition]. What the women the family say, that's the truth. Blowing our conch shells, we Brahmans throw dust in people's eyes."<sup>70</sup> Although it is not certain that *lokachar* is exactly the same as *sampradaya*, the two views suggest that normative authority is not *uniformly* accepted as being contained either in the realm of "*śāstra*" or in the realm of *lokachar* or *sampradāya*. Despite the priest's brother's prioritization of "popular tradition," Parry states that his "informants" assert that śāstric stipulations are considered "unquestionably authentic" (in another place, "unquestionably authoritative") and inviolable, while *laukika* (popular) is of "dubious validity" ("to be discarded if it offends against [sic] contemporary canons of good sense").<sup>71</sup>

### *Text and Moral Authority in Hindu Sacred Literature*

Authorship, orality, locatedness in cultures and languages, and occurrence across multiple media (art, architecture) are some variables that tangle the concept of "text" in Hindu contexts. Centuries could separate the composition of a text and its appearance in written forms, and manuscripts of purportedly the "same" text could be geographically dispersed.<sup>72</sup> Performance and patronage keep textual production in flux, tracing varying routes to history, social life, community ownership, and poetic vision. Thus "text" asks to be understood as positioned at an eternal intersection, in the midst of the traffic of human life, amid crisscrossings of written/recorded, oral/performed, and received/transmitted texts.<sup>73</sup> The many ways in

---

<sup>70</sup> Parry 1994:193–94.

<sup>71</sup> Parry 1994:193, 227.

<sup>72</sup> Vatsyayan 1996 explores these questions with regard to the *Natyaśāstra*. See also the introduction by Blackburn and Ramanujan 1986 for cycles of transmission and dissemination that transform the character of "texts" as they circulate through oral, written, and performed channels.

<sup>73</sup> Studies of epic traditions and the folklore of India brilliantly capture these processes. See, for example, Wadley 2004; Flueckiger 1996; A. Gold 1992; and

which texts are conceptualized in Hindu worlds helps us understand why it is also possible to envision and experience the normative in plural terms.<sup>74</sup> What are some of the ways in which texts claim moral authority, and how is the textuality of a text interwoven with that claim? In this section, I will allude to some directions in which scholars have explored this vast and complicated question.

At the level of authorship, there are texts whose moral authority lies in their having divine or transcendental authors (*apauruṣeya*) like the Vedas. Then, another kind of authorship is that associated with “Vyāsa” of the Mahabharata, a text that calls itself the “fifth Veda,” most appropriate for providing moral direction in the confused age of Kaliyuga. Vyāsa has been thought of as “symbolic” author who indexes an accretion of authors and therefore embodies the moral authority of tradition. Vyāsa has been imagined by Hindu epic and *purāṇic* traditions also as “mythical” author (a *ṛṣi*, or a seer whose scribe is none other than the god Gaṇeśa), and he has been understood as a mimetic author who “performs among humans the role that Brahma performs in mythology.”<sup>75</sup> In many Hindu narrative traditions, Brahma is recognized as the creator of the Vedas and the universe. A third way by which authorship bespeaks moral authority is seen in the signatures of *bhakti* poet-saints who address the divine with a personally-chosen name such as *Kūḍalasangamadeva* (“Lord of the Meeting Rivers”) or *Giridhara* (“hill-bearer”). The personally-chosen name of course conveys the poet’s identity, but it also points to an authorship that is united in poetry with the divine. As Jack Hawley notes, such a

---

Blackburn 1988. For how Tulsidas’s *Ramcharitmanas* lends itself to the creation of many texts when contexts of its “use” change, see Lutgendorf 1991.

<sup>74</sup> For an analysis of the varied ways in which “scripture” is conceptualized in Hindu life, see Coburn 1984; see also D. Gold 2000 for how followers of *nirguṇa* (the formless divine) and *saguṇa* (divinity with specific form) traditions experientially construct their worlds of authoritative scriptures.

<sup>75</sup> Sullivan 1994:384.

compounded signature, “anchors a poem to a life, a personality, even a divinity that gives the poem its proper weight and tone; and it connects it to a network of associations that makes the poem not just a fleeting flash of truth — not just new and lovely — but something that has been heard before and respected, something familiar and beloved . . . [lending poems] authority and conviction.”<sup>76</sup>

In terms of oral/aural textuality, the Vedas, conceived in sound, preserve their normative authority in sound. Sound is scrupulously regulated and protected for in it are embodied the rhythms of the universe and a language of communication with the gods — although David Carpenter speculates that parts of the Vedas have remained relatively unchanged because of the “extreme conservatism of those entrusted with their preservation.”<sup>77</sup> In fact, some Hindus consider reciting the Vedas from a book as against dharma — the Shankaracharya of the Kanchipuram maṭha maintains that the normative status of the Vedas is lost when it is read out of a book (or heard from an audiocassette).<sup>78</sup> The genre of the *vrata katha* is a more ubiquitous expression of how moral meaning is wrapped up in the oral/aural experience.<sup>79</sup> A *vrata* is a Hindu votive practice in honor of a specific deity, and is performed for auspiciousness, well-being, or a specific desire.<sup>80</sup> Especially popular among women, *vratas* are marked by fasting, worship, religious gathering, recitation, and storytelling. But a crucial part in the performance of the *vrata* is the telling and hearing of the story (*katha*) associated with it. Typically, *vrata kathas* recount the procedure of the *vrata* through the experiences and actions of an exemplar, and describe the benefits to be gained by the correct performance of the *vrata*. Although the moral content of a *vrata katha* is explicit, holding

---

<sup>76</sup> Hawley 1988:287–288.

<sup>77</sup> Carpenter 1994:31.

<sup>78</sup> Kanchipuram Shankaracharya 1995, esp. Ch. 7.

<sup>79</sup> See Wadley 1981; also see McGee 1991 for brahman women’s motives and aspirations for undertaking *vratas* in Tamilnadu.

<sup>80</sup> See McGee 1996b.

up as it does the life of an exemplar (usually a virtuous woman), the act of narrating (*kathana*) and listening (*śravaṇa*) at the end of the *vrata* provides the satisfaction of proper closure and the assurance of fruition. It is this overall oral/aural context that amplifies the dharmic ambience and the normative intent of the *vrata*.

The connection between text and normativity is also secured through processes of transcription, transcreation, or written composition. As Narayana Rao argues in the case of the Purāṇas, the “recorded” text is often only *part* of the story. The *paurāṇika*, or oral storyteller, who draws on his knowledge of, and training in, the Purāṇas, imparts “fullness” to the text in performance, and thus the *paurāṇika*’s knowledge shapes the “received” text.<sup>81</sup> To understand how texts travel across categories, acquiring possibly different shades of moral authority, one could turn to the well-known classification of texts into *śruti* (“heard”) and *smṛti* (“remembered”). Pollock finds that the term *smṛti* (that originated in *Pūrva Mīmāṃsa*) refers to a vedic text that is no longer available to be heard in recitation, but exists as “remembered.” The lost Veda surfaces in a new form through memory, and a *śruti* text comes to inhabit the world of *smṛti*<sup>82</sup> — bringing with it the imprint of authority of the Vedas (as in the Mahabharata, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and the *Tiruvāymoli* claiming to be the “fifth Veda.”) Āpastamba, the author of one of the oldest Dharmaśāstras, uses the “lost Veda” strategy to argue that all rules of dharma, whether or not traceable to extant Vedas, are ultimately derived from them. In the view of the Shankaracharya of the Kanchipuram matha, vedic association makes the Dharmaśāstras unmodifiable:

It is important to realise that if we are to remain true to the *śāstras* it is not because they represent the views of the seers but because they contain the rules founded on the Vedas which are nothing but what Īśvara has ordained.

---

<sup>81</sup> Narayana Rao 2004:114.

<sup>82</sup> Pollock 1997.

That is the reason why we must follow them. It is my duty to see that the *śāstras* are preserved as they are. I have no authority to change them.<sup>83</sup>

*“Śāstra” as an Imagined Text*

Sringeri perspectives remind us that moral praxis, while girded by transcendent arguments (of bhakti, vedic origins, Advaita, for example) is in fact quite thoroughly situated in local (and larger-than-local) structures and cycles (such as kinship, agricultural seasons, for instance), often historically-envisioned (“this [practice] is traced to the Vijayanagara times”), and interpersonally-developed (between parent and child, neighbors, or teacher and student). The unraveling of a lived grammar of the normative through ethnography uncovered for me a wide socio-semantic field of normative discourse and praxis which is characterized by a fluid movement between *śāstra*, *sampradāya*, *niyama*, *ācāra*, and *paddhati*. Contexts of usage and narration hold up the synonymy of these terms, but also hold up differences between them; differences in intention, in the nature and source of normative authority, in jurisdictions of moral and practical knowledge, in the efficacy of action, and in the flexibility associated with them. As individuals contextually sift the meanings and associations of these idioms of legitimacy, “the normative” manifests itself as an emergent phenomenon located in, and drawing on, a wide range of sources — oral, visual, written and practiced — spread across codebooks, exemplars, and practices — all of which bear intertextual relationships with each other. The boundaries of this socio-semantic field of *śāstra* continually shift, and as I suggest elsewhere, the poetics of social life preempt the drawing up of an exhaustive list of moral concepts that determine practice.

What keeps the normative from being fossilized or relegated to one set of codebooks is not only this range of normative sources of which *śāstra* is but one, but also the desire to work out a

---

<sup>83</sup> Kanchipuram Shankaracharya 1995:114.

dharmically-accountable life, and to create a clearing of auspiciousness in the jungle of ambiguity and uncertainty. Continuous reflection on what is binding, on the limits of innovation, and on what constitutes conformity and “sense of fulfillment” (*manas tr̥pti*) in addition ensure that normative authority and concomitant power are kept in circulation and diffused.

But conceptualizing an ethics-in-practice also means that we need to understand — to use Edward Said’s phrase to describe the interplay between Qur’anic text and circumstantiality — the “constitutive interaction”<sup>84</sup> between “injunction” and “action.” The constitutive interaction, I suggest, can perhaps be understood in terms of an *imagined text* that each individual or community puts together commingling memory with implicit learning and teaching. A sense of pervading *adr̥ṣṭa* (unseen) consequences, and an awareness of the provisionality of injunctive knowledge-systems thread the imagined text.<sup>85</sup> As Said says, “. . . texts have ways of existing that even in the most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society — in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly.”<sup>86</sup> Chayamma and Vijaya Krishnamurthy reminded me matter-of-factly that mothers, more generally elders, have a special agency in articulating the injunctive, and memory works in powerful ways to foster the connection between “what one’s elders did or taught” and “what one does.” The dos-and-dont’s that Nagalakshmi spontaneously outlined for me about

---

<sup>84</sup> Said 1983:39.

<sup>85</sup> One needs to recall that in the Hindu context, the invocation of a textual body in order to create new textual spaces — and resulting ethical shifts — is not an unusual phenomenon. See the essays in Patton 1994; Smith 1989; Richman 1991; Doniger 1993; Bose 2004. Anderson’s notion of *imagined community* is helpful to understand how social collectivities are imagined and cohere around a political goal, but I hesitate to draw strong parallels because the textual space I refer to is primarily moral and aesthetic, and not a national configuration. See Anderson 1991 [1983].

<sup>86</sup> Said 1983:35.

Malnad foodways (*aḍige paddhati*) came from the lifelong seeing-and-doing orientations of daily life that highlight Ajji's remark, "What is there to teach [explicitly]?" In a similar fashion, David Reck notes that in the context of Karnatic music, *śāstra* exists as an "invisible 'book' . . . in the collective minds of all musicians practicing within the tradition . . . there is a vast core of shared knowledge and agreement, the solid and tangible (though unwritten) common ground of tradition."<sup>87</sup> But Reck also notes that the "tradition is only partially conveyed by the guru to the disciple. The rest the *śiṣya* [disciple] and aspiring musician picks up simply by existing within the tradition 'like a fish swimming in water.'"<sup>88</sup>

Ajji's perception that *śāstra* and *paddhati* "are the same" in day-to-day conduct, but differ during certain rituals implies that the imagined text is contingent. This contingent, intertextual, imagined text also seems to underlie the dispersed interpretation of *śāstra* that master architects and sculptors hold in Tamilnadu. Samuel Parker observes, "In everyday speech *śāstra* is typically used by Tamil architects and sculptors, not in reference to books, but to *bodies of knowledge*" that are "objectified" in three interlinked ways: 1) in the person of the *sthāpati* (the master architect) 2) in temples and their sacred images and 3) in written texts (the *silpa-śāstras*). The priority of each of these understandings of *śāstra* is enunciated contextually. Thus, according to Parker, ". . . the living *sthāpati*, as a human incarnation of *śāstra*, is supreme in the context of production. The temple or image is supreme in the context of devotion. The text is supreme in the social negotiation of authority."<sup>89</sup>

Śāstric textuality, Pollock notes, is marked by "systematicity, stability, and repetition," and is a constitutive feature of the genre of

---

<sup>87</sup> Reck 1989:410.

<sup>88</sup> Reck 1989:411.

<sup>89</sup> Parker 2003:10.

*śāstra*.<sup>90</sup> One might ask what distinguishes the textuality of the imagined texts of moral praxis? Like the sacred subterranean river Sarasvati, the imagined text is both elusive and present in Hindu life, and like the river, it too has a presence that is defined by the perennial confluence and divergence of streams, oral and written, seen and done, regional and trans-regional, and lost and recovered pasts. While the precise textuality of imagined texts does not derive from any one particular text, imagined texts, born out of, and lending themselves to powerful interpretative agency, are marked by an intermediacy and a compositeness that comes from the collation of various rule-systems. The text can be firm (drawing on authoritative rule-systems) or fragile (open to vacillation, especially about “procedures” and “benefits”), or it can be flexible (supple bodies of rules adapting to situations) but bounded (limits relativism and interpretation).

What is interesting in Sringeri is that in this normative compass, the word “*śāstra*” occupies a particularly important place. Panduranga’s insight that when individuals cannot identify the “reason” for a rule, they ascribe it to “*śāstra*,” or Chayamma’s assertion that when challenged, one is likely to respond with, “this is my *śāstra*, this is my *sampradāya*” alerts us to the metaphorical potential in the term “*śāstra*.” When the word “*śāstra*” is invoked in conversation — “I did this for the sake of *śāstra*” or “this is what the *śāstra* says” — it only *sometimes* alludes to an actual body of rules like the Dharmaśāstras. More often than not, the word *śāstra* is used to bestow theoretically the immutability and authority associated with *śāstra* to imagined texts. The vast, continuously updating pool of normative resources and expressions and the constant putting together of imagined texts by each individual and community remind me of Ramanujan’s wonderful observation about the endemic presence of the Ramayana story in texts that appear as phrases, songs, folktales, curses, or even as arithmetic problems:

---

<sup>90</sup> Pollock 1989a:19.



These various texts not only relate to prior texts directly, to borrow or refute, but they relate to each other through this common code or pool. Every author, if one may hazard a metaphor, dips into it and brings out a unique crystallization, a new text with a unique texture and a fresh context . . . In this sense, no text is original, yet no telling is a mere retelling — and the story has no closure, although it may be enclosed in a text.<sup>91</sup>

In the end, I am inclined to argue that *śāstra* is in one sense, as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson would say, a “metaphor we live by.”<sup>92</sup>

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Bruce Lawrence, Ebrahim Moosa, S. Nagarajan, V. Narayana Rao, Patrick Olivelle, Melvin Peters, Ludo Rocher, Deepak Sarma, Sudha Shreeniwas and an anonymous reviewer of *Numen* for insightful feedback on earlier versions of this essay.

Department of Religion  
Duke University  
Durham, NC 27708  
USA  
leela@duke.edu

LEELA PRASAD

### REFERENCES

- Abbott, Justin E.  
1985 [1929] *Bahina Bai: A Translation of Her Autobiography and Verses*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Achaya, K.T.  
1994 *Indian Food: A Historical Companion*. Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Benedict R.  
1991 [1983] *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso.

---

<sup>91</sup> Ramanujan 1991:46.

<sup>92</sup> Lakoff and Johnson 2003 [1980].

- Bhattacharya, V., and I. Tripathi  
 1983 [1915] *Maharaja Nala's Pakadarpanam*, Banaras: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.
- Blackburn, Stuart  
 1988 *Singing of Birth and Death: Texts in Performance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Blackburn, Stuart, and A.K. Ramanujan  
 1986 *Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bose, Mandrakanta  
 2004 (ed.) *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Buhler, George  
 1969 (trans.) *The Laws of Manu*. New York: Dover. [Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1886.]
- Carpenter, David  
 1994 "The Mastery of Speech: Canonicity and Control in the Vedas". In *Authority, Anxiety, and Canon: Essays in Vedic Interpretation*, ed. Laurie L. Patton, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 19–34.
- Cenkner, William  
 1983 *A Tradition of Teachers: Śaṅkara and the Jagadgurus Today*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Coburn, Thomas  
 1984 "'Scripture' in India: Toward a Typology of the Word in Hindu Life." In *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering. Albany: SUNY Press, 102–128.
- Dallapiccola, Anna L.  
 1989 (ed.) *Shastric Traditions in Indian Arts*. Stuttgart: Steiner,
- Davis, Donald, Jr.  
 1999 "Recovering the Indigenous Legal Traditions of India: Classical Hindu Law in Practice in Late Medieval Kerala." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 27:159–213.  
 2004 "Dharma in Practice: Ācāra and Authority in Medieval Dharmaśāstra." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32:813–830.
- de Nobili, Roberto  
 2000 *Preaching Wisdom to the Wise: Three Treatises*. Trans. and Introd. Anand Amaldass and Francis X. Clooney. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources.
- Dhavan, Rajeev  
 1992 "Dharmasastra and Modern Indian Society: A Preliminary Exploration." *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 34.3:515–40.

- Divine Discourses of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyateertha Mahaswamigal*. Madras: Vidyatirtha Foundation, 1994.
- Doniger, Wendy  
 1993 *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jain Texts*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Dwivedi, R.C.  
 1985–86 “Concept of the Śāstra,” *Indologica Taurinensia* 13:43–60.
- Feldhaus, Anne  
 1982 “Bahiṇā Bāi: Wife and Saint.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50:591–604.
- Flueckiger, Joyce B.  
 1996 *Gender and Genre in the Folklore of Middle India*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gnanambal, K.  
 1973 *Religious Institutions and Caste Panchayats in South India*. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, Government of India.
- Gold, Ann  
 1992 *A Carnival of Parting: The Tales of King Bharthari and King Gopi Chand As Sung and Told by Madhu Natisar Nath of Ghatiyali, Rajasthan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gold, Daniel  
 2000 “Experiencing Scriptural Diversity: Words and Stories in Hindu Traditions.” In *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Steven T. Katz, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 210–231.
- Hawley, John Stratton.  
 1988 “Author and Authority in the *Bhakti* Poetry of North India.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 47.2:269–290.
- Janaki, S.S.  
 1992 “The Hand Gesture Patāka in Natya.” In *The Traditional Indian Theory and Practice of Music and Dance*, ed. Jonathan Katz, Leiden: Brill, 187–209.
- [“Kanchipuram Shankaracharya”] Pujyasri Chandrashekararendra Saraswati Swami  
 1995 *Hindu Dharma: The Universal Way of Life*. Trans. “Sri R.G.K.” [Orig. *Deivattin Kural*, Vols. 1 & 2.] Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai.
- Kane, P.V.  
 1962–75 *History of Dharmaśāstra*. 5 vols. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Khare, R.S.  
 1983 *Normative Culture and Kinship: Essays on Hindu Categories, Processes and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

- 2004 “Anna.” In *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, New York: Routledge, 407–428.
- Khare, R.S., and M.S.A. Rao. Eds.  
 1986 (eds.) *Food, Society, and Culture: Aspects in South Asian Food Systems*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvami  
 1999 [Śrīśrīcaitanyaacaritāmṛta ] *Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja: A Translation and Commentary*. Dimock, Edward C. (trans.) and Tony Stewart (ed.). (Oriental Series 56.) Dept of Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Harvard University.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson  
 2003 [1980] *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lariviere, Richard  
 1989 “Justices and Panditas: Some Ironies in Contemporary Readings of the Hindu Legal Past.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 48.4:757–769.  
 2004 [1997] “Dharmaśāstra, Custom, ‘Real Law’ and ‘Apocryphal’ Smṛtis.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32:611–627.
- Lutgendorf, Philip  
 1991 *The Life of a Text; Performing the Rāmcaritmanas of Tulsidas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McGee, Mary  
 1996a “Bahīnābāi: The Ordinary Life of an Exceptional Woman, or, the Exceptional Life of an Ordinary Woman.” In *Vaisnavi: Women and the Worship of Krishna*, ed. Steven J. Rosen, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 133–169.  
 1996b “In Quest of Saubhāgya: The Roles and Goals of Women as Women as Depicted in Marathi Stories of Votive Devotions.” In *Images of Women in Maharashtrian Literature and Religion*, ed. Anne Feldhaus, Albany, NY: SUNY, 146–170.  
 1991 “Desired Fruits: Motive and Intention in the Votive Rites of Hindu Women. In *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*, ed. Julia Leslie, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 71–88.
- Monier-Williams, Monier  
 1986 [1899] *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Nagaraj, D.R.  
 2003 “Tensions in Kannada Literary Culture.” In *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 323–382.

Narayana Rao, Velcheru

- 1990 *Śiva's Warriors: The Basava Purana of Pāṅkuriki Somanātha*. Translation assisted by Genre Roghair. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 2004 "Purāṇa." In *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, New York and London: Routledge, 97–115.

Olivelle, Patrick

- 1999 *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasiṣṭha*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2004 "Manu and the *Arthaśāstra*: A Study in Śāstric Intertextuality." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32:281–291.

Parker, Samuel

- 2003 "Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective." *Artibus Asiae* LXIII.1:5–34.

Parry, Jonathan P.

- 1994 *Death in Banaras*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Patton, Laurie

- 1994 (ed.) *Authority, Anxiety and Canon: Essays in Vedic Interpretation*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Pollock, Sheldon.

- 1985 "The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory in Intellectual History." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105.3:500–501.
- 1989a "The Idea of *Śāstra* in Traditional India," In *Śāstric Traditions in Indian Arts*, ed. Anna L. Dallapiccola, Stuttgart: Steiner, 17–26.
- 1989b "Playing by the Rules: *Śāstra* and Sanskrit Literature." In Dallapiccola 1989:301–312.
- 1997 "'Tradition' as 'Revelation': Śruti, Smṛti, and the Sanskrit Discourse of Power." In *Lex et Litterae: Essays on Ancient Indian Law and Literature in Honour of Oscar Botto*, ed. S. Lienhard and I. Piovano, Turin: Edizioni dell'Orso, 395–417.

Prasad, Leela

- 2006 (forthcoming). *Poetics of Conduct: Oral Narrative and Moral Being in a South Indian Town*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ramachandra Rao, S.K.

- 1979 *Consciousness in Advaita: Source Material and Methodological Considerations*. Bangalore: SAVSSRA.

Ramanujan, A.K.

- 1973 (trans.) *Speaking of Siva*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- 1989 "Is there an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay." In *India Through Hindu Categories*, ed. McKim Marriott, New Delhi: Sage.

- 1991 "Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas, Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation." In *Many Rāmāyaṇas: A South Asian Tradition*, ed. Paula Richman, Berkeley: University of California Press, 22–49.
- Richman, Paula
- 1991 (ed.) *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Reck, David
- 1989 "The Invisible *Sāstra*: A Personal Memoir of Musical Study in India," In *Shastric Traditions in Indian Arts*, ed. Anna L. Dallapiccola, Stuttgart: Steiner, 407–414.
- Rocher, Ludo
- 1984 "Father Bouchet's Letter on the Administration of Hindu Law." *Studies in Dharmaśāstra*, ed. Richard Lariviere, Firma KLM, 4–15.
- 1985 "The Kāmasūtra: Vātsyāyana's Attitude Toward Dharma and Dharmaśāstra." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105.3:521–529.
- 1993 "Law Books in an Oral Culture: The Indian *Dharmaśāstras*." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137.2:254–267.
- 1994 "Orality and Textuality in the Indian Context." *Sino-Platonic Papers* 49: 1–28.
- 2003 "The Dharmaśāstras." In *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin Flood, Blackwell, 102–115.
- Row, B.R.
- 1927 *Selections from the Records of the Sringeri Mutt*. Mysore: Government Branch Press.
- Said, Edward
- 1983 *The World, The Text and the Critic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Saraswate Boy
- 1836 *Pākaśāstra, otherwise called Soopaśāstra, or the Modern Culinary Receipts of the Hindoos, compiled in Teloogoo by Saraswate Boy*. Trans. C.V. Ramaswamy. Christian Mission Press: Madras.
- Sarma, Deepak
- 2003 *An Introduction to Madhva Vedānta*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publications.
- Schweig, Graham M.
- 2002 "Humility and Passion: A Caitanyite Vaishnava Ethics of Devotion." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30:421–444.
- Shastry, A.K.
- 1982 *A History of Śrīngēri*. Dharwad: Karnatak University Press.

Smith, Brian K.

- 1989 *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stoker, Valerie

- 2004 "Conceiving the Canon in Dvaita Vedānta: Madhva's Doctrine of 'All Sacred Lore.'" *Numen* 51.1: 47–77.

Sullivan, Bruce

- 1994 "The Religious Authority of the Mahābhārata: Vyāsa and Brahma in the Hindu Scriptural Tradition." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62.2:377–401.

Vatsyayan, Kapila

- 1989 "Inaugural Address." In Dallapiccola 1989:1–4.  
1996 *Bharata: The Nāṭyaśāstra*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academi.

Wadley, Susan

- 1981 "Vrats: Transformers of Destiny." In *Karma: An Anthropological Inquiry*, ed. Valentine Daniels and Charles Keyes, Berkeley: University of California Press, 146–162.  
2004 *Raja Nal and the Goddess: The North Indian Epic Dhola in Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig

- 2001 *Philosophical Investigations*. 3rd ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford, U.K: Blackwell.

Zarrilli, Phillip

- 1989 "Between Text and Embodied Practice: Writing and Reading in a South Asian Martial Tradition." In Dallapiccola 1989:415–424.

# COMPLETING THE PICTURE: WOMEN AND THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE IN THE MITHRAIC CULT\*

ALISON B. GRIFFITH

## *Summary*

In the recently revived debate on the possible involvement of women in the Mithraic cult the main points of contention are the value and reliability of limited archaeological and epigraphic evidence and of two passing references to women's involvement in works by Porphyry and Tertullian. At one end of the spectrum, Richard Gordon proposed an alternate "Mithraic" world that not only excluded women but also subverted the female principle entirely. At the other end, Jonathan David challenged the claim that women were excluded from the Mithraic cult and proposed the possibility of *lea* and *mater* grades. The first part of this paper tackles the vexed issue of "evidence" by conducting a more thorough and stringent review of the physical evidence than that offered by David on this subject. The conclusion that none of this evidence is unequivocally Mithraic is hardly new; the aim is to put the debate to rest. The second part of this paper explores Porphyry's distinct but ambiguous reference to women as "hyenas" in the context of the Mithraic cult. In this section Gordon's theory of an alternate Mithraic reality is modified in order to reconcile numerous female sex and gender associations apparent in the iconography of the tauroctony scene.

Recently in this journal Jonathan David challenged women's exclusion from the Mithraic cult as a long-held but unsubstantiated supposition.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of archaeological and epigraphic evi-

---

\* I would like to thank Luther Martin and Richard Gordon for suggestions and comments on an early draft of this article, and I am particularly indebted to the latter for his direct and invaluable observations on the evidence and argumentation. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.

<sup>1</sup> J. David, "The Exclusion of Women in the Mithraic Mysteries: Ancient or Modern?" *Numen* 47 (2000) 121–41. See also A. Blomart, "Mithra: quoi de neuf en 1990?," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9 (1996) 427–35, at 434–35, who



dence examined in light of and in combination with relevant though meagre textual evidence, his conclusions were as follows:

1. That the passage from Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* 4.6 permits a reading of “lionesses” which, when taken into consideration with other archaeological and epigraphic evidence, suggests that there may have been a *lea* (lioness) grade in the Mithraic cult.
2. That women’s participation in the Mithraic cult may be further evident in representations of women from several mithraea and dedications by women, some of which may also attest a grade of *mater* in the cult.
3. That, in sum, women participated in the Mithraic cult in some parts of the Empire and were not actively excluded “on any theological or ideological basis,” and that their participation was infrequent either because the cult thrived in male environments or because women were not often asked to join, or invested their time in other cults.<sup>2</sup>

In David’s view, Franz Cumont’s assertion that women were excluded from the Mithraic cult has no basis in fact.<sup>3</sup> However, close examination reveals that very little of the textual or archaeological evidence for women’s participation cited by David is unimpeachable, as several scholars have already concluded.<sup>4</sup> Women are conspicuously absent from the few membership lists, graffiti and representations of members that survive, they do not appear as dedicators even in domestic mithraea in Rome and Ostia, and they are not represented in Mithraic art.<sup>5</sup> Whether women chose not to

---

suggests that although unattested, equivalent female titles might have existed for all the grades.

<sup>2</sup> David 2000:139.

<sup>3</sup> David 2000:129.

<sup>4</sup> David 2000:121–23 and nn. 1–6 summarizes the recent major opponents. See n. 6 below.

<sup>5</sup> Lists: Virunum (G. Piccottini, *Mithrastempel in Virunum*, Klagenfurt 1994); Sentinum (V 688 = *CIL* XI.5737 = *ILS* 4215); M. Clauss, *Cultores Mithrae*,

participate, or whether they were excluded actively or coincidentally remains an unresolved issue.<sup>6</sup> This paper reviews the archaeological and epigraphic evidence according to strict standards, and evaluates Gordon's claim of a womanless Mithraic world by re-examining the iconographic evidence with broader notions of gender in mind.

### I. Review of the Evidence

*Texts:* The textual evidence for the cult of Mithras is meagre, problematic and equivocal. Tertullian's reference to *virgines* and *continentes* in the context of Mithraic practices is too enigmatic to be taken as solid evidence of women's participation without support from some other quarter:<sup>7</sup>

*Et, si adhuc memini, Mithra signat illic in frontibus milites suos. Celebrat et panis oblationem et imaginem resurrectionis inducit et sub gladio redimit coronam. Quid, quod et summum pontificem in unius nuptiis statuit? Habet et virgines, habet et continentes.*

And, if I remember correctly, he [the devil] makes the sign of Mithra right on the foreheads of his own soldiers. He celebrates an offering of bread and

---

Stuttgart 1992, 56–58). Graffiti: Dura–Europos (V 54–70; Clauss 1992:238–42). Representations: Mainz vessel (I. Hulde-Zetsche, “Der Mainzer Krater mit den siblen Figuren,” in M. Martens and G. De Boe [eds], *Roman Mithraism: the Evidence of the Small Finds*, Tienen 2004, 213–227); Capua paintings: V 187–97 and M.J. Vermaseren, *The Mithraeum at S. Maria Capua Vetere: Mitriaca I* (EPRO 16), Leiden 1971; and S. Prisca paintings (V 480–85).

<sup>6</sup> Of the scholars who state that this was a cult for men only, only Turcan goes so far as to posit active exclusion: R. Turcan, *Les Cultes Orientaux dans le monde Romain*, Paris 1992, 240. R. Gordon posits exclusion on ideological grounds (see n. 58 below), while M. Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras* (trans. by R. Gordon), Edinburgh 2000, 33, and Clauss 1992, 264 suggests that the absence of women might have happened by chance and become “tradition” only later, by default. M. Beard, J. North and S. Price, *Religions of Rome 1: A History*, Cambridge 1998, 298 state that women were not initiated, but suggest a marginal presence. In an earlier round of the debate see J. Ferguson, “More about Mithras,” *Hibbert Journal* 54 (1955) 319–26, and J.M.C. Toynbee, “Still More About Mithras,” *Hibbert Journal* 54 (1955) 107–14.

<sup>7</sup> *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 40.4–5.

he introduces the semblance of resurrection and he acquires a crown under the sword. Moreover, did he (not) also establish the highest priesthood in the marriage rites of one only? He also has virgin maidens and celibate youths.

The passage is not just inscrutable it is also unreliable in that Tertullian's sole aim was to criticize non-Christian (i.e. heretical) practices as false. Its value as evidence for women's participation has therefore been criticized.<sup>8</sup>

Porphyry's reference to a role for women in *De Abstinencia* 4.16.3 has sparked considerable discussion:

3 Τὴν γὰρ κοινότητα ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς τὰ ζῷα αἰνιττόμενοι διὰ τῶν ζῴων ἡμᾶς μὴνύειν εἰώθασιν· ὥς τοὺς μὲν μετέχοντας τῶν αὐτῶν ὀργίων μύστας λέοντας καλεῖν, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας ὑαῖνας, τοὺς δὲ ὑπηρετοῦντας κόρακας. Ἐπὶ τε τῶν πατέρων <\*\*\*>· αἰτοὶ γὰρ καὶ ἰέρακες οὗτοι προσαγορεύονται. Ὁ τε τὰ λεοντικά παραλαμβάνων περιτίθεται παντοδαπὰς ζῴων μορφάς·

3 They symbolise our community with animals by giving us the names of animals: thus initiates who take part in their rites are called lions, and women hyenas, and servants ravens. In the case of the Fathers [*lacuna*] for they call them eagles and falcons. The man who attains leonine rank puts on all kinds of animal forms.<sup>9</sup>

This crucial and oft-cited passage quotes Pallas' now lost work on Mithras and refers to the animals used to symbolize members and their roles in the Mithraic community. Scholarly opinion on the manuscript tradition for *De Abstinencia* has undergone a *volte face*: Vaticanus gr. 325 is now generally accepted as the archetype for all extant manuscripts,<sup>10</sup> and thus the definite reading ὑαῖνας (hyenas)

<sup>8</sup> Toynbee 1955:108 dismisses out of hand both this reference and that in Porphyry. David 2000:127 accepts the evidence from both Porphyry and Tertullian, arguing that in combination with the Oea tomb it "may point specifically to a North African variant of Mithraism in which women were involved, as Tertullian's *exempla* are generally African."

<sup>9</sup> Translation by G. Clark, *Porphyry On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, London 2000. For a discussion of the lacunae, see 188, n. 637.

<sup>10</sup> In the first volume of the Budé edition (1977) J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon postulated a lost archetype from which two manuscript traditions descended: the Vatican manuscript (V) and another lost manuscript (Ψ). In the third volume

has replaced A. Nauck's emendation λεαίνας (lionesses) supplied to fill a lacuna that appears in some manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> Traditionally, the argument for a "*lea*" grade for women in the Mithraic cult rested primarily on the reading λεαίνας in combination with limited archaeological evidence, but this is no longer tenable. I will return to Porphyry's ὑαίνας presently.

*Archaeological evidence:* Let us begin with the Oea tomb, which was first brought to scholarly attention in 1903 by Clermont-Ganneau, and systematically excavated and studied in 1914 and 1918–1919 by Pietro Romanelli.<sup>12</sup> The tomb consists of two rock-cut *loculi* for sarcophagi. Both the *loculi* and the surrounding walls were plastered and painted, and it is on the basis of these paintings that the tomb is dated to the late 3rd/early 4th century CE. Painted inscriptions (no longer extant) above each tomb identified the occupants as Aelius Magnus, son of Iuratanus, and his wife Aelia Arisuth.<sup>13</sup> On the lids of the sarcophagi were two other *dipinti*: [*Qui*] *leo iacet* and *Qui lea iacet*,<sup>14</sup> accompanied by a leaping lion and lioness. Clermont-Ganneau argued that this pair was initiated in the Mithraic cult and held the grade of *leo* (*lea*), and he further suggested that this evidence confirmed the reading in Porphyry as λεαίνας rather than ὑαίνας.<sup>15</sup> Once the entire tomb was visible, Romanelli concluded that the paintings for each *loculus* were com-

---

(1995) M. Patillon and A. Segonds concluded that the Vatican manuscript is the archetype for all extant manuscripts. This is accepted by English translator, G. Clark 2000:22–24, 188 n. 637.

<sup>11</sup> A. Nauck (ed.), *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*, 2nd ed., Leipzig: Teubner 1886, repr. 1977.

<sup>12</sup> P. Romanelli, "Tomba Romana con Affreschi del IV Secolo dopo Cristo nella Regione di Gargáresh (Tripoli)," *Notiziario Archeologico del Ministero delle Colonie*, vol. 3, Rome 1922, 21–32 and figs. 1–11 and plan. This remains the most thorough publication on the site.

<sup>13</sup> *CIL* 8.22687 (Iuratanus) and *CIL* 8.22688 (Aelia Arisuth).

<sup>14</sup> V 114 and V 115.

<sup>15</sup> M. Clermont-Ganneau, "Les Sépulcres à Fresques de Guigariche et le Culte de Mithra en Afrique," *Comptes-Rendus des Séances: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1903) 357–63, at 361–62. Announcements of the find without

posed primarily of elements common to Roman tombs in North Africa and elsewhere in the Roman world,<sup>16</sup> queried whether the deceased chose the decoration of the tombs, and further argued that the decoration of the tombs was not Mithraic since the (now invisible) inscriptions and the lion and lioness on the sarcophagus lids were the only element that could be interpreted as Mithraic.<sup>17</sup>

Maarten Vermaseren, who may not have seen the Oea tombs himself, later compared the two beardless young men on either side of Aelia Arisuth's tomb to a figure on the north wall of the S. Prisca mithraeum. Each of the youths in the Oea tomb holds a candlestick with a lit candle in the right hand and a garland in the lowered left hand, and wears a below-the-knee-length tunic (*dalmatica*) decorated with richly embroidered red bands across the top and bottom. The S. Prisca painting features a procession of *leones* wearing masks and tunics of various colours and holding a piece of (presumably) liturgical equipment, and the figure in question wears a blue tunic and holds a candlestick with four burning candles, or so Vermaseren initially thought.<sup>18</sup> He suggested that this similarity (candles) further confirmed that the Oea tomb belonged to initiates in the Mithraic cult,<sup>19</sup> but later concluded that exact identification of the objects held by the S. Prisca *leo* was impossible.<sup>20</sup> David's conclusion about this once-supposed similarity, that

---

substantive description appeared in H.N. Fowler, "Archaeological news," *American Journal of Archaeology* 9 (1905) 131, and *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1904) 117–18.

<sup>16</sup> Roman elements in the tombs include the chariot race scene below Aelia Arisuth's sarcophagus niche, the reclining *genii* on the side-walls of both niches, the corona with the epitaph of Aelia Arisuth supported by winged cupids above the niche, and the vine motives on the top of both niches. In the years immediately after the discovery there was significant discussion about possible Christian elements in the iconography (Romanelli 1922:31–32).

<sup>17</sup> Romanelli 1922:31.

<sup>18</sup> V 115 compared to V 482,6.

<sup>19</sup> M.J. Vermaseren, *Mithras, the Secret God*, London 1963, 163.

<sup>20</sup> M.J. Vermaseren and C.C. Van Essen, *The Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of Santa Prisca in Rome*, Leiden 1965, 149–50 no. 6.

“the iconography of the two sites is quite similar, in general, suggesting a possible link between the couple of Oea and the roughly contemporary mithraeum in Rome,”<sup>21</sup> completely overlooks Vermaseren’s uncertainty about the pertinent figure in the S. Prisca mithraeum and makes more of the evidence than is warranted. Moreover, the Oea figures are clad differently, do not wear masks, are not *leones* and are not engaged in a Mithraic ritual, as opposed to the masked, tunic-clad *leones* in the Mithraic procession at S. Prisca. In short, there is no evidence linking the iconography of the Oea tomb to the mithraeum of S. Prisca. Finally, the paintings from the two sites overlap in time but could hardly be called contemporary since the S. Prisca paintings date to the early 3rd century, whereas the Oea tomb and its paintings have been dated to the late 3rd/early 4th century.

In further support of a *lea* grade, David cited statuary fragments including an incomplete head of a lioness belonging to a bronze statuette recovered from a cache of small bronzes found as they had been hidden, in a “pocket” of brick-clay buried in the ground at Angleur.<sup>22</sup> None of the other pieces, mostly statuettes, is obviously Mithraic and several are definitely not.<sup>23</sup> The fact that none of the fragments can be definitely associated with a mithraeum, much less with Mithras, discounts the lioness statuette fragment as evidence for a *lea* grade. So also, the pair of recumbent lion and lioness statues recovered from the Kroisbach mithraeum and now at the Sopron museum certainly cannot be interpreted as evidence of a *lea* grade in the absence of any other secure evidence corroborating the existence of such a grade.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> David 2000:126 and n. 18 in which he cites Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965:148–50; V 113 and J. Reynolds and J.B. Ward-Perkins (eds.), *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*, London 1952, no. 239.

<sup>22</sup> V 962.

<sup>23</sup> V 954–64. The group includes a (possibly recumbent) lion statuette, uncited by David, with a hole running from mouth to stomach.

<sup>24</sup> V 1640. F. Kenner, “Das Mithraeum von Kroisbach,” *Mittheilungen der*

*Statues of goddesses and mother goddesses in mithraea.* Representations of and dedications to goddesses in mithraea were common,<sup>25</sup> although there has never been any reason to suppose that their presence attests the devotion of women exclusively. In particular, several statues representing female figures have been recovered from mithraea in the European provinces,<sup>26</sup> and whereas David

---

*K.K. Central-Commission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale* 12 (1867) 119–32 at 123–24 and fig. 2. The excavator was uncertain as to whether these had been used to frame the entrance or as waterspouts.

<sup>25</sup> A cursory review *only* of Vermaseren's catalogue indices and not of any material found subsequently, for example, indicates representations of or dedications to various goddesses. Juno was most often represented or received a dedication as part of the Capitoline triad (V 328/9, 1199, and 1208) or as part of an assembly of gods (V 140, 1430,C1 and possibly 2340,3 and V 1284, a base from Neuenheim with relief representations of Hercules, Minerva and Mercury). Minerva often appears with Juno (V 140, 328/9, 1284, 1430,C1 and 2340,4) or with other male deities in a Mithraic context (V 291, a krater with Minerva, Jupiter, Dionysus and Hercules, V 1318, a relief with Minerva and Vulcan, and V 1382/3, a group of six bronze hatchets dedicated to Jupiter, Neptune, Minerva, Mercury, Matrona and the Matres), or even individually (V 441 from the Forum Boarium mithraeum in Rome, V 1086 from the Nida mithraeum and V 1260 at Dieburg [see n. 26 below]). She is also represented on one of the many reliefs from Stockstadt mithraeum I (V 1183) and with other male deities on the tau-roctony relief from Biljanovac in Moesia Superior (V 2202,3). See also V 931, a group of statuettes, among them Minerva, from Les Bolards but not necessarily to be associated with a mithraeum. Although less represented, Diana appears in her association with Luna as a tutelary planet of the fifth Mithraic grade, Perses, at the mithraeum of the Seven Spheres in Ostia (V 241,1), with the other deities represented in relief in mithraeum I at Stockstadt (V 1184), and in the assembly of gods on the Osterburken relief (V 1292,1).

<sup>26</sup> As noted in the entry to V 850 and in Richmond and Gillam 1951:30 n. 32: these include a relief of Epona from Hedderheim (V 1094); a relief of Epona from Stockstadt I (V 1188); hatchets dedicated to various gods (see n. 25 above) including to the Matronae and the Matres (V 1382/3); an altar dedicated to the Matronae (V 1066) and another to the Deae Quadvruiae (V 1067) at Friedberg, and the lower part of a relief featuring a goddess and dedicated to "*Dea Sancta* . . ." (V 1138/9), and also from Dieburg, part of a statue of a woman clad in a tunic and mantle and possibly to be identified as Minerva (F. Behn, *Das*

argued that a mother and child group from the Dieburg mithraeum and a statuette of a seated woman from the Carrawburgh mithraeum<sup>27</sup> were portraits of benefactors, both figures are universally interpreted as Celtic goddesses whose style, iconography, pose and attributes are present in numerous other examples of such goddesses.<sup>28</sup> The statuette from Dieburg is a traditional “Dea Nutrix” type representing a woman seated on a throne and nursing a swaddled infant at her left breast<sup>29</sup> and exhibiting stylistic devices common to Celtic religious art including disproportionately large heads (emphasis by exaggeration) and schematisation of facial features in order to highlight the action of nursing.<sup>30</sup> The Carrawburgh statuette is seated and holds a basket (symbolizing prosperity) or water vessel (symbolizing fertility) in her lap. The rather heavy-set body lacks naturalistic proportions and volumes and the facial features are even more schematised than those of the Dieburg statuette.<sup>31</sup>

---

*Mithrasheiligtum zu Dieburg*, Berlin 1928, 34–35 and fig. 37; V 1260) as well as a statue bust in high relief of a woman wearing a diadem, possibly to be identified as Juno (Behn 1928:35 fig. 38; V 1261). Excluded is the dedication to several deities including Epona and the Matronae (V 1094) from Allmendingen, cited both by Richmond and Gillam and by Vermaseren, because it is not definitely from a Mithraic context.

<sup>27</sup> David 2000:126. Dieburg: Behn 1928:35, no. 14 and fig. 39. H 23 cm. V 1262 and Carrawburgh: I.A. Richmond and J.P. Gillam, *The Temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh*, Newcastle 1951, 30 and pl. Xa. H 40 cm. V 850.

<sup>28</sup> M. Green, *Symbol and Image in Celtic Religious Art*, London 1989; and *The Gods of the Celts*, Gloucester 1986; S. Barnard, “The Matres of Roman Britain,” *Archaeological Journal* 142 (1985) 240; A. Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, London 1967; G. Schauerte, “Darstellungen mütterlicher Gottheiten in den römischen Nordwestprovinzen,” in G. Bauchhenß and G. Neumann (eds.), *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten* (Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher 44), Cologne 1987, 54–102.

<sup>29</sup> Green 1989:30–32; Schauerte 1987:79–81 and 96.

<sup>30</sup> M. Green 1986:203–216.

<sup>31</sup> Richmond and Gillam 1951:30 note also that the figure is more weathered than other statuary in the mithraeum, suggesting that the statue was brought from elsewhere for reuse.



The head of a statue of a woman from the S. Prisca mithraeum in Rome tentatively supposed by David to be a votive offering or portrait of a benefactor of the mithraeum must also be discounted.<sup>32</sup> This head was found just outside the door in the right side (south) wall of the mithraeum during the process of creating an artificial ventilation cavity.<sup>33</sup> Though proximal to the mithraeum, the material from the S. Prisca mithraeum is problematic in that the sanctuary was vandalized and its subsidiary rooms intentionally filled in during the late 4th century.<sup>34</sup> The presence of this fill, which contained a significant quantity of pottery and statuary fragments, complicates our understanding of what can actually be associated with the sanctuary during its period of active use. The excavators ultimately concluded that the head to which David referred was part of the fill and not the mithraeum.

*Inscribed dedications.* A number of dedications to Mithras by women have been cited in support of the idea of women's participation in the cult, but none can be unquestionably shown to be both a dedication to Mithras and by a woman.<sup>35</sup> Manfred Clauss

---

<sup>32</sup> David 2000:126. He mistakenly identifies it as a bust; it is broken at the neck and might have been part of a full statue.

<sup>33</sup> Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965:82–84 (description of the excavation), 454 no. 11 (the catalogue) and pl. 119, 1–4. (H 0.16 m). There were numerous other fragments from the fill including the following: a head of a woman in Greek marble reportedly found on the floor of the mithraeum during excavation in 1935 (Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965:342 no. 22 and pl. 77.3–4 and A. Ferrua, “Il Mitreo sotto la Chiesa di Santa Prisca,” *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica del Governatorato di Roma* [1940] 66, fig. 5); the head of a woman in marble also found in the room beside the cult niche and now so eroded that it is difficult to identify the hairstyle or to determine whether the plain facial features are attributable to a veristic style or the sculptor's lack of skill (Vermaseren and Van Essen, 1965, 434 no. 5 and pl. 103.2–3); a fragment with the lower part of a nude woman emerging from leaves (Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965:343 no. 26 and pl. 78.4); and a small nymph holding a shell (Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965:346 no. 44 and pl. 79.4).

<sup>34</sup> Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965:241–42.

<sup>35</sup> David 2000:127–30. See also R. Macmullen, *Paganism in the Roman*

excluded all except a dedication from Rheder (Germania Inferior) that reads *D I M Fir|mino votum refe|ret Ius|tini Pat|erna | v[|sllm]* or *D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) Firmino votum referet Iustini Paterna v(otum) [s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)]*.<sup>36</sup> Several aspects of the text are problematic. The dative *Firmino*, which might be construed as *pro Firmino* rather than the more usual *pro salute Firmini*, is not a standard usage. In one explanation of this variation from the norm, the line is the beginning of a hexameter.<sup>37</sup> But, as Gordon has noted, Paterna should precede rather than follow *Iustini*, Firminus' relationship to Paterna (he is neither her husband nor a male relative in this reading) remains unclear, and *votum* is referred to twice.<sup>38</sup> Omitting one *votum*, a rough translation might be "Paterna wife (or daughter) of Justinus freely, gladly and deservedly fulfils a vow to Deus Invictus Mithras for (i.e. on behalf of, or for the health of) Firminus." Given the lack of a known provenience, *D I M* might just as well refer to *D(is) I(nferis) M(anibus)* as to *D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae)*, as in another of the allegedly Mithraic dedications by women (see below). In sum, so many aspects of the inscription are open to question that it would be

---

*Empire*, New Haven 1981, 101, n. 31. All those he cites are addressed herein except three. First, V 177 = *CIL* X.1591 (2470), a dedication to Sol Invictus and the Genius of the Colonia by Cl(audius) Aurel(ius) Rufinus and his wife, now in Pozzuoli but of unknown provenience. Similarly, V 1952 = *CIL* III.1118 (which Macmullen and Vermaseren doubt) also a dedication to Sol by a husband, wife and son of unknown provenience from Mures-Port (Dacia). Finally, V 2064/65 = *CIL* III.7938, a single incomplete name "Terentia . . ." inscribed on a tauroctony scene from the Sarmizegetusa mithraeum. Vermaseren suggested "Terentia[nus]."

<sup>36</sup> *CIL* XIII 7958/9 = V 1034 = E. Schwertheim, *Die Denkmäler Orientalischer Gottheiten im Römischen Deutschland* (EPRO 40), Leiden 1974, no. 41.

<sup>37</sup> F. Hettner, *Katalog des königlichen rheinischen Museums vaterländischer Alterthümer bei der Universität Bonn*, Bonn 1876, 25–26 no. 71.

<sup>38</sup> I am grateful to Richard Gordon for allowing me to read and refer to an unpublished manuscript in which he resolves all these difficulties by reconstructing the name of a man in the last two lines: *Iustini(us) Patern(i)a(n)u[s]* or *Iustini(us) Patern{a}(us) v[et(eranus)]*.

imprudent to accept it as the only dedication to Mithras by a woman. All these can be resolved with Gordon's suggestion that we construe the name as Iustini(us) Patern(i)a(nus) or Iustini(us) Patern{a}(us) v[et(eranus)].

The 3rd-century prayer to Dominus Aeternus by Cascelia Elegans carved on four sides of a marble altar recovered from the Castra Peregrinorum mithraeum remains elusive.<sup>39</sup>

*Domine aelterne,*  
*ro|gat te Cascellia Ele[g]ans, |*  
*per misericordiam tuam*  
*[pro] | se et pro suos olmnes.*  
*Quomoldo tu hibus c[r]iatoribus miselrtus es,*  
*rogat te, | aeter[ne],*  
*per te[r]ram et marem | divinum,*  
*per | quidquid [b]oni | creasti,*  
*per sal | et seminata sac(ra), |*  
*et mi et meis ro|g[o] eis miserearis.|*  
*Per tuam piletatem,*  
*Per | legem vivam, |*  
*per creatur(as), |*  
*aeterne, te pro|pitium, |*  
*pro me[o] comserlvo et pro nata | mea*  
*et pro domilno meo Primo |*  
*et Celia patrolni (uxore), |*  
*domine.*

In the prayer Cascelia Elegans addresses a deity *Dominus Aeternus* (Eternal Lord), calling on him to be merciful (*miserearis*) and favourable through his creations (animate and inanimate) and his qualities (compassion [*misericaordia*], justice [*pietas*] and “the living law” [*legem vivam*]) on behalf of herself, her relations and her patron Primus and his wife Celia (or Coelia/Caelia or Gelia/Gellia).

---

<sup>39</sup> *L'Année épigraphique* 1980, no. 51. Lissi-Caronna 1987:43–44 and S. Panciera, “Il Materiale Epigrafico dallo Scavo di S. Stefano Rotondo,” in U. Bianchi (ed.), *Mysteria Mithrae* (EPRO 80), Leiden 1979, 87–108 but especially 97–108.

Three controversial points are of particular interest here: the identity of *Dominus Aeternus*, the dedication by a freedwoman Cascelia Elegans (albeit through a male patron Primus), and the possibility that this dedication was not originally located in the mithraeum. The epithet *Dominus Aeternus* is unparalleled, and not even *Deus Aeternus* has been specifically connected with Mithras. Although a conflation of Sol-Aion-Mithras has been proposed,<sup>40</sup> this anomalous altar is more plausibly accounted for as one of several dedications to deities other than Mithras introduced into the mithraeum from elsewhere in the camp in the late 3rd-century phase of the sanctuary.<sup>41</sup>

The supposed dedication to Mithras from Emona in Pannonia Superior by a woman named Blastia is also doubtful.<sup>42</sup> The current location and original provenance of the altar are unknown; the text is based on an older, unconfirmed transcription: *D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) | Silvano Augusto | Sac Blastia | c(. . .) e(. . .) b(. . .)*.<sup>43</sup> There are reasons to doubt the transcription. The name “Blastia” is otherwise unattested in comparison to the more common Blaste and male Blastus and Blastion. The amalgamation of Mithras and Silvanus is anomalous, as is an asyndetic dedication to both deities. Since epitaphs make up the majority of inscriptions in Pannonia and other parts of the Empire and are notorious for the wide variation in letter quality, it is entirely possible that the noted anomalies are in fact improperly transcribed words. Peter Dorcey’s omission

---

<sup>40</sup> See Panciera 1989 and G. Mussies, “Cascelia’s Prayer,” in U. Bianchi and M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *La Soteriologia de Culti Orientali nell’Impero Romano* (EPRO 92), Leiden 1982, 156–67.

<sup>41</sup> Lissi-Caronna 1987:43–44; Clauss 1992:25 n. 94.

<sup>42</sup> V 1463. Clauss 1992:160. See also L. Zotovic, *Le Mithraïsme sur le Territoire de la Yougoslavie*, Belgrade 1973, 34, no. 44, and 149. A. and J. Sasel, *Inscriptiones Latinae Quae in Iugoslavia inter Annos MCMXL et MCMLX Repertae et Editae Sunt*, Ljubljana 1963, 109 no. 302 are of the opinion that Blastia is a woman and that this inscription shows that women were part of the cult.

<sup>43</sup> “Sacred to Deus Invictus Mithras Silvanus Augustus. Blastia . . .”

of this inscription may be understood as confirmation of its unreliability.<sup>44</sup> He demonstrates that Silvanus' epithets were almost entirely Latin or Greek and that he was a sign of Romanization in the provinces of the Danube and the Balkans. He further shows that Silvanus was rarely associated with imported deities such as Isis, Serapis, Jupiter Sabazius, Jupiter Hammon, Sol or Jupiter Dolichenus, and that his only connection to Magna Mater was through the epithet *dendrophorus*. Finally, he argues that use of the epithet *invictus* is "too general" to be regarded as Mithraic and that the presence of a limited number of representations of Silvanus in mithraea at Ostia, Rome, Ptuj and Budapest does not substantiate a conflation of the deities or cults.<sup>45</sup> Given these many limitations, it is impossible to regard this dedication as sound evidence of a dedication to Mithras by a woman.

Several other dedications commonly cited in connection with women and the Mithraic cult are also doubtful. First, a relief of Aion now in Modena but possibly from Rome, is almost certainly Mithraic

---

<sup>44</sup> Peter F. Dorsey, *The Cult of Silvanus: A Study in Roman Folk Religion*, New York 1992, 83.

<sup>45</sup> Dorsey 1992. Roman deity: 68–81; not associated with imported deities: 31, 82; association with Pan, Nymphs, Diana in Dalmatia: 69–71; "*invictus*" not a Mithraic reference: 82–3 and nn. 178–79. V 502 (Rome) is probably a dedication to Sol Invictus (Clauss 1992:17 n. 2 contra Clauss 1990:3). V 565 = *CIL* VI.590; 30799 is a dedication of unknown provenience to Silvanus alone. The examples from Ostia, although found in mithraea (V 276: Mithraeum of the Footprint and V 283 = *CIL* 14.53: Mithraeum of the Animals near the temple of Magna Mater) are dedications to Silvanus alone. Even the mosaic of Silvanus from the mithraeum in the so-called "palazzo imperiale" makes no reference to Mithras. The relief fragment from the Poetovio III mithraeum (V 1604) may show the lower half of Silvanus and his dog, but there is no indication that Mithras was also represented. The relief showing Silvanus from Aquincum (V 1764) was reportedly found near but not in Aquincum 3. The lack of any trace of a shrine to Silvanus within the S. Stefano Rotondo mithraeum has led the excavators to conclude that the dedication to him recovered from the mithraeum was introduced into it from elsewhere in the last phase (Panciera 1989:95–97, and Lissi-Caronna 1987:43–44).

despite its uncertain provenience. The dedicatory inscription is now thought to indicate two men: *Euphrosyn[us] et Felix | pp(osuerunt) | Felix pater*, rather than the woman “Euphrosyn[e]” and Felix.<sup>46</sup> Second, a dedication from Soulan (Gaul) by Faustus and Modesta is now excluded as a forgery: *Deo A. C.T.C. | Faustus | Modesta | V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) M(erito)*.<sup>47</sup> Third, the altar dedicated by Varia Severa from Milan, which reads *D(eo) [i(nvicto)] M(ithrae) | Varia | Q(uinti) F(ilia) | Severa | v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)* is problematic in that its original provenance is unknown but especially because the restoration of *invicto* is conjecture.<sup>48</sup> Vermaseren suggested that “*Dis Manibus*” were indicated, or as above with the Paterna dedication from Rheder, *D(is) [I(nferis)] M(anibus)*. Dedications to “*Deum Matris*” (the Mother of the Gods) and to the “*Dis Magnis*” (the Great Gods) as shortened forms of full dedication “to the Great Idaean Mother of the Gods” are also well attested.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> “Euphrosynus and Felix placed (this altar). Felix *pater*.” Clauss 1992:47 n. 5. Compare R. Merkelbach, *Mithras*, Königstein 1984, 324: *Euphrosyn[us] et Felix/ p(ecunia sua) p(osuit)* and Vermaseren (V 695/6): *Euphrosy[n]e et Felix. p(ecunia) p(osuit)/ Felix pater* to be translated “Euphrosynus (or Euphrosyne) and Felix. Felix *pater* placed (this altar) with his own money.”

<sup>47</sup> V 883 “To the god A C T C/ Faustus and Modesta fulfill (their) vow gladly and deservedly.” C. Jullian, “Notes Gallo-Romaines: XLIX Un Faux Mithraeum dans les Pyrénées,” *Revue des Études Anciennes* 13 (1911) 79–80 examined the inscription and concluded that the letters were recut in the modern era following traces of the original inscription. See also Clauss 1992:288 and V.J. Walters, *The Cult of Mithras in the Roman Provinces of Gaul* (EPRO 41), Leiden 1974, 142–43.

<sup>48</sup> “To Deus (Invictus) Mithras, Varia Severa, daughter of Quintus, willingly and deservedly fulfilled her vow.” V 705 = *CIL* 5.5659. Not referred to in Clauss 1992.

<sup>49</sup> Dedications to the Great Idaean Mother of the Gods are particularly common from 4th-century Roman senators. See M.J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque* vols. 1–7 (EPRO 50.1–7), Leiden 1977–1989 (hereafter *CCCA*) vol. 3 nos. 221–44 and V 513–515 and 520 but for references to the Mother of the Gods

There was, in fact, an established connection between the cults of Magna Mater and Mithras in some locations, but this does little to clarify other supposedly Mithraic dedications by women. For example, the oft-cited inscription on a column recovered from the so-called “Mithraeum of the Animals” at Ostia records the dedication by Junia Zosime, *mater*, of a silver statue of Virtue of the Dendrophors weighing two pounds: *Virtutem | dendrop(horis) | ex arg(ento) p(ondo) II | Iunia Zosime | mater | d(ono) d(edit)*.<sup>50</sup> Nothing about the dedication, apart from the provenience, suggests that it was specifically to Mithras; rather, the clear reference to dendrophors and the situation of the mithraeum in the precinct of Magna Mater confirms that the goddess is referred to.<sup>51</sup> It is entirely possible, given the proximity of the two temples and the fact that Ostia was gradually abandoned in the late 3rd and 4th centuries, that this dedication was removed from its original context and abandoned in the mithraeum after its period of active use. Its presence in a mithraeum does not attest Junia Zosime’s devotion to Mithras or a *mater* grade in the Mithraic cult.<sup>52</sup> We may compare one of three inscribed marble statue bases originally situated in niches in the back wall of the temple of Magna Mater in

---

see in particular the epitaph (V 206 = *Ephemeris Epigraphica* 8.648) and dedicatory statue bases (V 395A = *CIL* 6.31940 and V395B = V 516 = *CIL* 6.1675) to Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius, a tauroboliate of the Mother of the Gods. Outside Rome see *CCCA* 4 no. 75 (Stabiae), *CCCA* 5 no. 183 = *CIL* II.178 (Olisipo, Hispania), 5 no. 270 = *CIL* XII.4323 = *ILS* 4120 and no. 274 = *CIL* XII.4327 (Narbo, Gaul), 5 no. 359 = *CIL* XII.1569 (Dea Augusta in Gaul), 5 no. 87 = *CIL* VIII.26562 (recording the construction of a portico for the temple of the Mother of the Gods in Thugga, N. Africa), and 6 no. 108 (Gerulata, Pannonia).

<sup>50</sup> “Junia Zosime gave as a gift a (statue of ) Virtue of the Dendrophors of two pounds of silver.” V 284 = *CIL* XIV.69. Not referred to in Clauss 1992.

<sup>51</sup> It is catalogued in the corpus of monuments to Cybele: *CCCA* 3 no. 412. M. Floriani Squarciapino, *I Culti Orientali ad Ostia* (EPRO 3), Leiden 1962, 9 n. 4 suggested that the statue was a dedication to Bellona, and Vermaseren concurred.

<sup>52</sup> David 2000:130.

the Ostia precinct, which records that Q. Domitius Aterianus *pat(er)* and Domitia Civitas *mat(er)* dedicated a statue of Attis.<sup>53</sup> One presumes that the pair were biological parents, or less likely, that they held the positions of *pater* and *mater* in the cult of Magna Mater.

An inscribed altar from Cologne records a dedication to Dea Semele and her sister goddesses by Reginia Paterna: *Deae Semelae et | sororibus eiuis | deabus ob honorem | sacri matratus | Reginia Paterna | mater nata et | facta aram polsuit | sub sacerdot[al](e) | Seranio Catullo | pa[tre]*, who celebrated having been born and made a *mater* (*mater nata et facta*) and having been accorded the honour of wearing the holy dress of a matron (*ob honorem sacri matr(on)atus*) under the priestly authority of Seranius Catullus, *pater*.<sup>54</sup> Vermaseren thought the altar Mithraic on the grounds that Seranius Catullus was “the father of a Mithras community which had relations with a cult for women with a mater,”<sup>55</sup> but this reference to *pater* is the only possible connection to Mithras, and it is not universally accepted.<sup>56</sup> The dedication was recovered in 1674 in Machabäerstraße in circumstances not well recorded but apparently not from a mithraeum nor close to the two known mithraea on the north side of the Roman colony. Since Mithras is clearly not the recipient and the sides of the altar are decorated with a *tympanum*, *pedum* and altar (left) and *thyrsus* and *crotola* (right), a possible connection with the cult of Dionysus has also been suggested.<sup>57</sup> Even on the tenuous assumption that Seranius Catullus was a

---

<sup>53</sup> CCCA 3 no. 404 = CIL XIV.37 = ILS 4114. Despite the title *pater*, Q. Domitius Aterianus was excluded from Vermaseren’s Mithraic catalogue and Clauss’ list of Mithraists.

<sup>54</sup> CIL XIII.8244 = ILS 3384.

<sup>55</sup> V 1027.

<sup>56</sup> Schwertheim 1974:257. Seranius Catullus is not included in Clauss 1992.

<sup>57</sup> B. and H. Galsterer, *Die römischen Steininschriften aus Köln*, Cologne 1975, 38, no. 134.



Mithraic *pater*, the further supposition that Reginia Paterna was a Mithraic *mater* is completely groundless. Finally, this reference to Semele in a potentially Mithraic context is without parallel, so we cannot even entertain the notion of a grade of *mater* connected to Luna/Semele alongside the *pater* grade of Mithras.

The foregoing survey of texts, inscriptions, paintings, and statuary has shown that none of the supposed evidence for women's participation in Mithraism withstands scrutiny. The phantom *lea* grade is not suggested by the Oea tomb paintings nor supported by Porphyry's *De Abstinencia* 4.16.3 or representations of lionesses from mithraea; none of the supposed dedications to Mithras by women can be shown to be both to Mithras and made by a woman; and finally, women are not listed among the members of mithraea and are not represented in paintings or statuary in them. However, it is equally true that no evidence supports the widespread claim that women were actively excluded from the cult. Certainly one might infer "zero toleration" from "zero participation," but if that was the case, why did Porphyry (quoting Pallas) mention women at all, and why did he give them a label (or role) as hyenas? For this reference is, in Richard Gordon's words "... the only explicit evidence we possess for the role of women in the Mysteries."<sup>58</sup>

## II. The Womanless World?

Some years ago now Gordon brought anthropological theory concerning deliberately constructed religious worlds to bear on the Mithraic Mysteries. From his central argument that "the deliberate non-intelligibility of the Mithraic belief is confirmed by the Mysteries' attempt to deny the ultimate reality of the real world, by classifying it out," arose the hypothesis that "reality" within the Mithraic world — symbols, actions and utterances — was a carefully constructed fiction drawing on the real world for explication

---

<sup>58</sup> R. Gordon, "Reality, Evocation and Boundary in the Mysteries of Mithras," *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 3 (1980) 19–99, at 58.

and validation.<sup>59</sup> This he tested on the Mithraic grades by elaborating on the associations and symbolic meanings of the animal grade names (*leo*/lion and *corax*/raven) and their tutelary planets from “ancient lore,” or a notional “Graeco-Roman encyclopaedia” of information culled by him from a range of texts. In this way, he suggested, “factual knowledge of a selected kind . . . may help us to glimpse connections between a number of disparate items of Mithraic evidence which cannot be linked without an appeal to such knowledge.”<sup>60</sup> The idea of a constructed, alternate Mithraic reality is widely accepted and investigation of its meanings is an ongoing endeavour. Even more tenacious is Gordon’s conclusion that women were utterly absent from Mithraic “reality,”<sup>61</sup> and that this absence was not just a fact, or even a coincidental by-product arising from the selection of a model institution (e.g. *collegia*) for structure, but a conscious choice that defined both the Mysteries and one of its core tenets, ultimate separation (from this world) implied by the process of *genesis* and *apogenesis*.<sup>62</sup> In Gordon’s view the names of the grades emphasized “. . . the exclusion or suppression of the female or the feminine, either linguistically or socially,” so succinctly expressed by Porphyry’s “hyenas.”<sup>63</sup>

The term “hyena” for women strikes modern and ancient readers as highly uncomplimentary, although the ancient belief that hyenas could change sex and the consequential suitability of this animal as a grade name for women in the Mithraic cult has been duly noted.<sup>64</sup> Gordon argued that the ancient “cultural significance” of hyenas, that is their stereotypical image as sex-changing, carrion-eating beasts that suffocated their victims and had an uncanny

---

<sup>59</sup> Gordon 1980:22–24.

<sup>60</sup> Gordon 1980:28.

<sup>61</sup> So also Clauss 1990 (Gordon 2000:33): “This was a cult in which the female principle played no rôle, either on the divine or on the human level . . .”

<sup>62</sup> Gordon 1980:42–43.

<sup>63</sup> Gordon 1980:44.

<sup>64</sup> Gordon 1980:58–61; G. Clark 2000:188 n. 637, and David 2000:135.

nily human laugh, outweighed scientific fact then even as it does now. Hyenas, he concluded, were to the ancient mind not just “anti-human” but “anti-male,” highly dangerous, unstable and supremely tricky.<sup>65</sup> This view of women as hyenas and the decidedly negative ancient lore surrounding this animal allowed Gordon to substantiate his claim of hostility towards and exclusion of women in the Mysteries as reflected in the grade structure, concluding that, “It [is] plausible to argue that the hyena was an entirely appropriate name for women in a cult committed to the principle of the supremacy of the male or the masculine.”<sup>66</sup> Was it the case, however that women, and by extension the female principle, had to be acknowledged and labelled as hyenas in order to be subverted? On Gordon’s own reasoning the answer would be “no.” Religious worlds and religious realities are fantasy and pretence, entirely separate and sometimes patently absurd, when compared to the physical reality of the world. The logical implication is that anything is possible in religious reality, and anything from the laws of physics to the existence of women may be denied. But Porphyry, through Pallas, accepts the existence of women by reference to them and to an animal role for them: hyenas. Gordon observed a tripartite distinction (μὲν . . . δὲ) between initiated members (τοὺς μετέχοντας . . . μύστας), women (τὰς γυναῖκας) and servants (τοὺς δὲ ὑπηρετοῦντας), but dismissed the order (and that of the roles: λέοντας . . . ὑαῖνας . . . κόρακας) as irrelevant — Pallas’ use of animal names was intended to make a point about Mithraic belief in metempsychosis. In his view Pallas contrasted women (hyenas) and servants (ravens) with full members and in doing so implied that they were not members at all. As Gordon rightly observes, Pallas would have “put his point differently” if he had really been talking about women as members.<sup>67</sup> But if the ancient view of hyenas was as inimical to society, the order of the items in the sentence

<sup>65</sup> Gordon 1980:59–60.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon 1980:61.

<sup>67</sup> Gordon 1980:57–58.

*does* matter. If “hyena” were merely a label for something so dangerous that it had no presence in the cult, as Gordon argued, surely it would be last and not sandwiched between full cult members (lions) and servants ranked at the lowest grade raven, who did have a role in cult rituals and activities. If Gordon’s conclusion that this is nothing more than a value judgement on women is unsatisfactory, the only other option is to take Porphyry literally and speculate that women participated in the cult as hyenas (whereas men moved through the seven grades), as is attested by the very fact that they are referred to explicitly, assigned a role, and mentioned in the context of other legitimate roles: lions (initiates) and ravens (servants). Speculation can go no further; no other physical evidence corroborates this (possible) role for women. Neither explanation for Porphyry’s hyenas is completely satisfactory, which only underscores the extent to which a single piece of evidence can substantially alter our view of the past without actually clarifying it.

Mithraism’s rich visual symbolism must also be considered. In Gordon’s view the iconography confirmed the supremacy of the male and the male principle, but a re-evaluation of this imagery with rather broader notions of gender is appropriate here. For in point of fact, while many symbols central to the Mithraic cult may be regarded as gender ambiguous, and could thus be interpreted as substantiating the dominance of male over female, others have strong female associations and thus express a carefully balanced tension of male–female opposition. Let us begin with the main Mithraic cult image, a scene of tauroctony that illustrates a pivotal moment in which Mithras sacrifices a bull amidst a collection of human, divine and animal figures. None of these is merely what it appears to be superficially; rather all are symbols of planets, of constellations, or of the various grades in the cult hierarchy.<sup>68</sup> Most interesting for our purposes are elements representing and symbolizing

---

<sup>68</sup> Extensive discussion about the meaning of the symbols, individually and as an aggregate whole is summarised and referenced in R. Beck, “Mithraism since Franz Cumont,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 17.4 (1984) 2002–2112.

the earth and water, all of which were associated with the feminine in most ancient cultures in the Mediterranean region. Luna, the tutelary planet of the fourth Mithraic grade, *Perses*, is shown personified as a woman with a crescent headdress and often driving a *biga* drawn by oxen. The planet Venus, which is associated with the second Mithraic grade *nymphus*, is represented by a snake. Both these deities also amply connote regeneration through extended associations. As the moon Luna affects the menstrual cycle and tides and is thus associated with moisture. Venus, the archetype of feminine beauty, is associated with sexual intercourse and with the perennial reproductive capacity of the earth, as is represented by the snake's shed skin. The tauroctony scene has also been identified as a tableau of constellations, and in particular those on or near the celestial equator at the vernal equinox.<sup>69</sup> Here one may further connect the snake to the constellation Hydra, and the uterine-shaped *krater* (often shown overturned and with water spilling out) to its celestial counterpart, Krater. Cautopates of the lowered torch represents not only autumn, but also the onset of evening and the appearance of Venus, while Cautes of the raised torch symbolizes dawn as well as the arrival of spring and new growth. Venus' liminal role is reflected in her two names, Phosphoros/Lucifer (light-bringer) and Hesperos (Evening).<sup>70</sup>

Let us explore some of the implications of the symbolic meaning of the tutelary planets. Gordon argued that Venus' liminal aspect and strong association with the transition from light to dark and vice versa makes her an ambiguous and two-faced figure. Her association with the grade *nymphus* is thus apposite since, as Gordon reminds us, a *nymphus* (male nymph) exists only conceptually.

---

See also Merkelbach 1984; R. Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras* (EPRO 9), Leiden 1988; and D. Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World*, Oxford 1989.

<sup>69</sup> See K.B. Stark, "Die Mithrasstein von Dormagen," *Jahrbücher des Vereins von Altertumsfreunden im Rheinlande* 46 (1869) 1–25, and n. 68 above.

<sup>70</sup> Gordon 1980:49.

In ancient Greek and also in Latin nymphs are decidedly and exclusively female, as is the word νύμφη that represents them. Nymphs are nubile young women associated with springs, trees, mountains and the sea, but νύμφη also referred to new brides and to the chrysalis or pupa stage of insect development. The pupa, like the bride, like nymphs, and like Venus, represents pregnant potential. Thus *nymphus* is an invented term that, in Gordon's view, "occupies a deliberately impossible semantic space, that . . . mediates between the two mutually exclusive terms of the binary opposition *bride* vs *groom*."<sup>71</sup> The word is often translated "male bride" or "bride-groom" (not bridegroom), as in the male bride of the god Mithras, although for Gordon *nymphus* is untranslatable (how can a non-thing be translated, after all), precisely because of its mediatory or interstitial nature. As he further asserts, the *nymphus* is "a sort of marital androgyne, a fusion of male and female at the point of marriage."<sup>72</sup> The difficulty can be resolved by reconsidering the very qualities that typify Venus and nymphs; their sexuality and the implicit allusion to child-bearing, their pregnant potential in other words. On this view we are not meant to focus on the gender roles of the bride and the groom inherent in *nymphus* or the confusion arising when we try to comprehend the roles as fused. Rather, we should consider the fusion itself, which happens in the consummation of a marriage, and in its natural outcome, procreation. In *nymphus*, then, we have the pregnant potential of the nymph and Venus transferred in a metaphorical sense onto the male initiate in the context of the cult. He need not be considered the male bride of Mithras, but rather a seed of potential in the cult.

Gordon's reading of Venus' two-faced quality runs in the opposite direction entirely, suggesting not just liminality but, more dangerously, ambiguity. This line of thinking better serves his conviction that the cult excluded women, but poses a significant problem for

---

<sup>71</sup> Gordon 1980:48.

<sup>72</sup> Gordon 1980:49.

explaining the association between Venus, the archetype for female sexuality and “governess” of marriage, and *nymphus* grade in such a cult.<sup>73</sup> To sustain his argument Gordon was obliged to subvert Venus’ common associations, suggesting instead that the answer lies in a Mithraic “secret truth” of Venus’ bisexuality in which “the female is not an independent principle, it is part of the male.”<sup>74</sup> This subordination, he concluded, makes an ordinary marriage an apt symbol because women passed from the authority of one male to that of another. Venus’ bisexuality, then, was a link between the womanless fantasy-world of the Mysteries and its real-world counterparts, the imperial bureaucracy and the Roman legions, and was further reflected in what Gordon argued were male-affirming, female-excluding grades of *nymphus* and *perses*. Having subordinated female sexuality to that of the male, Gordon then elaborated on ambiguity, bisexuality and dependence, citing Venus’ sexless birth from the sea and comparing it to Mithras’ sexless birth from a rock, which he saw as deliberately strange.<sup>75</sup> In short, the constructed world of the Mysteries contained intentional absurdities, and Gordon offered a complicated explanation for these. All of these apparent absurdities can be easily accounted for by keeping strictly to basic ancient gender associations without resorting to unverifiable “secret truths.” Working in reverse order, we can thus interpret the long-supposed “rock” that bore Mithras represented in painting and sculpture as an iconographic expression of “earth,” which is so universally associated with the female principle and characterized as a “mother” in ancient religions that it needs no further elaboration.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, while women became subject to the authority of their husbands at the time of marriage, we need not construe the male *nymphus* as a subordination of female sexuality

---

<sup>73</sup> Gordon 1980:52.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon 1980:53.

<sup>75</sup> Gordon 1980:51, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Ulansey 1989:35–36 suggested that Mithraists might have interpreted the Mithraic cave as “symbolizing the interior of the rock out of which Mithras was born.”

to that of the male, but quite the opposite. Marriage was the beginning of a key role for women in society as bearers and raisers of children; far from subordinating female sexuality, its consummation unleashed it.

Let us consider now the bull sacrifice and its setting. The main action takes place in a cave, often represented in Mithraic art by an arched area over Mithras and the bull, or by attempts to produce a rough rocky surface in stone or in paint. In his *De Antro Nympharum* Porphyry asserts that the cave represents the cosmos because, as it was believed, the moist, humid dimness of caves symbolized the formless state of flux associated with matter. The cosmos is misty and dim because of the matter of which it is made, but also beautiful because it gives form and order to matter. Thus, Porphyry explains, a cave is pleasing for its form but at the same time it is a place of murky and obscure depths.<sup>77</sup> Since caves are hollows in the earth created and sustained by springs, they were thus also associated with nymphs as well as with the cosmos in antiquity. Mithraic sanctuaries were intentionally cave-like and were almost always provided with a source of water or located near one. Symbolically, then, the waters of life flowed in and from a cave/cosmos representing matter, and more importantly the ordered and connected form of which living things consist. Within the cave occurs Mithras' struggle with the bull. The resulting sacrifice is a necessary one — it *must* happen in order to produce plant and animal life. Iconographically, then, the tail of bull metamorphosizes into wheat ears, while the dog laps eagerly at the blood emerging from the wound. The scorpion seems ineluctably attracted to the life-producing testicles, whose semen it will unloose with its pincers to spill on the earth. As before, we are looking at constellations of the vernal equinox, the threshold of spring: the wheat ears are Spica, the dog is Canis Major, the scorpion is Scorpio, the raven Corvus, the snake Hydra, the bull Taurus, and

---

<sup>77</sup> Porphyry, *De Antro Nympharum*, 5–6. Ed. and translation Arethusa 1 (1969).



Mithras can be interpreted as Perseus or Orion.<sup>78</sup> This tableau of abstracted images represents not merely sacrifice, but an act of creation in which fertile rock (earth) bears Mithras, who then finds, subdues and slaughters a life-giving bull in life-giving cave.

Still more is at work here. Mithras' primary association is with the sun. A direct line of communication exists between Sol, usually placed in the upper left corner of tauroctony scenes, and Mithras, which is sometimes reinforced by their locked gazes or a sunray reaching down to Mithras, or by the raven acting as a messenger between them. In the Roman cult Mithras' connection with the sun is axiomatic, and indeed in certain tauroctony representations he is shown in a series of smaller side scenes as making a treaty with Sol, assuming Sol's powers, and celebrating this deed with a banquet. Mithras, like the sun, has the power to evoke or release the potential of entities capable of bringing forth life. We have already alluded to these capacities in Luna and Venus, but we must now look at the critical moment, the death of the bull. Nothing could seem more virile than a bull. This is highlighted by the obvious effort Mithras expends to keep the bull under control while he kills it, not to mention the broad, forceful gesture as he stabs the bull in the neck. The extended pincers of the scorpion draw the viewer's attention to another fertile target, the testicles. In Hindu tradition, and in the ancient Mediterranean, bulls were also associated with the moon.<sup>79</sup> When painted in tauroctony scenes the bull is white and the crescent shape of its horns and of its arched back is echoed in the crescent shape of the waxing and waning moon, and also in the so-called horns of the moon. It has also long been noted that the bull's head and horns replicate schematically the female reproductive organs,<sup>80</sup> thus linking the ultimate symbol of masculine fertility to that of the female. This bull, then, is not

---

<sup>78</sup> See Ulansey 1989, and M. Speidel, *Mithras-Orion*, Leiden 1980.

<sup>79</sup> Ulansey 1989:18.

<sup>80</sup> M. Rice, *The Power of the Bull*, London 1998, 151. The clearest reminder of this phenomenon is prominence of bull skulls in the cult of the Goddess in

entirely male, and we are reminded once again of Mithras' odd "male bride" *Nymphus*.

If Mithras is the sun and the bull the moon, the tauroctony would appear to represent an eclipse. It is one of nature's ironies that the moon can appear to blot out the sun (and vice versa), but this power is occasional and temporary. In the end, it is the sun which triumphs over the moon when it reconquers its "lost" light. This struggle is replicated in the cycle of day and night, and also in the seasonal change of length in days and nights. So, too, it is true that living things need both light and darkness, hot and cold, dry and wet in order to live and grow. The natural world is thus one of binary oppositions. Every quality, every property has its equal and necessary opposite. For every aspect that is male, there is an equal and opposite female counterpart. In this world the struggle is not about ultimate power but about the cyclical generation and regeneration of life; it is a struggle about unleashing latent and potent life forces. The same is true in Mithraic "reality," wherein the bull *must* be sacrificed in order that there be life in the cosmos at all. Mithras, the bull-slayer, must bring it all about.

The foregoing examination of cult iconography and its underlying meanings provides ample evidence of a cult in which the generation of life was by no means devoid of female sex and gender associations. Even if no women were directly represented in cult imagery, several figures, including that of the bull, had strong associations with female goddesses and qualities. Basing her argument largely on Gordon's claim of a womanless world, Ariadne Staples argues to the contrary:

The cult of Mithras was based on a deliberate rejection of the realities of the world, as they were perceived to exist. Instead, the initiate entered into a deliberately constructed cosmic entity, governed by a carefully constructed cosmology. Central to that cosmology was the rejection of the female . . . the

---

Catal Hüyük and the use of the horns and skull of the bull as a determinative in hieroglyphic writing.

Mithraic cosmos was complete: it *was* the universe [original emphasis]. Beyond its boundaries existed nothing. The rejection of women was therefore total. In the mysteries of Mithras women had no status because they simply did not exist. Even their exclusive function of child-bearing was denied in both the myth and the ritual by an appeal to the fantasy of sexless generation. Mithras was born from a rock.<sup>81</sup>

In Staples' view the Mithraic world was not only womanless, it was not of woman born. Technically speaking, both are true, but the point is oversimplified. The Mithraic world *is* ostensibly one of sexless generation, but the men in it are equally deprived of their investment in procreation. There is no reason to suppose that the "fantasy of sexless generation" was either universally or uniquely male, even in an all-male cult. Moreover we have already seen that the "rejection of women" was by no means "total." If it is not simply the case that Mithras usurped the most basic and most important female role in an otherwise womanless world, what, then, are we to make of Mithras as a male deity who bestows life through sacrifice?

Symbolically this sacrifice represents the creation of plant and animal life. Similar stories of the creation of life exist in many cultures and religions, and in these that vital moment when life is created is often achieved not with sex but through other inanimate means. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, to take just one example, there is "God" and He said, "Let there be light." He created plant and animal life afterwards, but the matter of future procreation was left to the separate species themselves. While this moment of creation is undeniably sexless, the subsequent population of the earth in that belief system can hardly be said to be so. So also in Mithraic cosmology in which Mithras brings about life by slaughtering a bull in a symbolic act more to do with fertility than the particular way in which life is created. This is birth by transformation and metamorphosis of a single entity into many others;

---

<sup>81</sup> A. Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgin: Sex and Category in Roman Religion*, London and New York 1998, 37.

child-bearing has not been denied, or even usurped, it just does not figure in the creation myth of the cult.

The visual expression of the sacrificial act of creation in the tauroctony scene is thus achieved through identifiable figures, which upon examination are seen to be abstracted representations in a highly dualistic setting of multiple meanings and interpretations. It is hardly surprising, given the fundamental subject of creation, that many of the elements — the cave, the bull, Luna, the krater, and snake — have strong female associations. Although the moment of creation — the sacrifice of the bull — may be sexless, adherents of Mithraism lived in a world of procreation by sex and in which there were women. It therefore does not stand to reason that a cult that completely denied the existence of women so as to create a cosmos through “the deliberate rejection of the realities of the world” could become as popular as Mithraism was in its time. If religions offer an alternate world, as Gordon has argued, they must meet the challenge of validating that world by reference back to the “real world” in order to attract followers.<sup>82</sup> What is more, their credibility also depends on their ability to address the mundane needs of their followers. So, far from constituting a complete “rejection” of women in a world of “sexless generation” utterly devoid of women and in which the female principle is subordinated to that of the male, the highly engendered iconography of the tauroctony scene facilitated validation of the Mithraic world by reference to the real world. In such an alternate world, one in which souls move between the celestial and the earthly spheres in *genesis* and *apogenesis*, questions of sex and gender lose their meaning. Lack of direct reference to women and to heterosexual procreation does not in our view indicate the complete subordination of the female principle in favour of that of the male. In the Mithraic world life is generated and the souls, which contain its essence, enter and leave corporeality in a cosmos that gives form to matter. As shown in

---

<sup>82</sup> Gordon 1980:22–23.

this elucidation of Mithraic iconography, this world cannot be said to be womanless any more than it can be said to be manless. It needed both to exist.

### III. Conclusion

Our current data indicate that women did not participate in the Mithraic cult. No archaeological evidence supports the existence of a grade such as *lea* or *mater* for women. More importantly, there is not a single inscription that is both undeniably Mithraic and made by a woman. While dedications to goddesses in mithraea were possible, nothing suggests that these were made by women. The argument for active exclusion of women depends on inference; that is, one might infer that women were excluded from the lack of evidence for their inclusion. The absence of women as participants notwithstanding, we have argued herein that reference to women as hyenas in Porphyry's *De Abstinencia* acknowledges their existence ideologically even if it does not confirm a physical role in cult practice, and also that the female principle permeates several core symbols in Mithraic iconography and may be read even from the setting and central figure — the cave and the bull. The very fact of the ambiguity and liminality that typifies hyenas, Venus, and Luna — the primary expressions of the female principle in Mithraic iconography — attests a role of binary opposition and interdependence, rather than the subversion of the female principle to that of the male.

Department of Classics  
University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800  
Christchurch  
New Zealand  
alison.griffith@canterbury.ac.nz

ALISON B. GRIFFITH

CHARITABLE CHOICE:  
THE RELIGIOUS COMPONENT OF THE  
US-WELFARE-REFORM — THEORETICAL AND  
METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON “FAITH-BASED-  
ORGANIZATIONS” AS SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

ALEXANDER-KENNETH NAGEL

*Summary*

Are religious institutions gaining new strength in the modern welfare state? The concept of “Charitable Choice” is part of a comprehensive welfare reform under the Clinton-Government in 1996. It aims at the formal inclusion of religious organizations (“Faith-Based-Organizations”) into the public welfare system. The new relevance of religious organizations as social service providers goes along with a shift of ideas of social inequality and deviant behaviour in terms of having not only structural and economic but also behavioural and moral reasons. The question arises, what is so productive about Faith-Based-Organizations, and, are religious institutions perhaps even more efficient than “secular” agencies? In this essay, I will discuss these questions from a theoretical and methodological point of view, arguing that religious studies have to adjust their analytical framework to the new situation. Religion has by no means lost its collective and material dimension. Therefore, I shall present neo-institutional- and neo-capital-theories as more appropriate approaches than the outdated remains of secularization theory or postmodern etherealism.

*I. Introduction: The Fallback of Secularization Theory*

Secularization has long been regarded an inevitable fate in the process of “modernization.” Scholars of religious decay from anthropology and the sociology of knowledge have used harsh words to point to the irresistible and irreversible evaporation of religion: “The evolutionary future of religion is extinction. . . . Belief in supernatural powers is *doomed to die out, all over the world*, as the result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge” (Wallace 1966:265; emphasis added). In his influential, yet heavily criticized

book *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), Peter Berger located the origin of secularization in religious pluralism: in the course of depriving former state religion of its monopolized status, religious entrepreneurs strive for their share of the “religious market.” Pluralism thus contaminates the high spheres of the sacred with a profane logic of market and competition. It is the customers’ demand which now decides about the prosperity or bankruptcy of “religious firms.” Resting on general anthropological dispositions, however, the demand for religion is by far not as differentiated as the pious trajectories of religious traditions. This basic human unambiguity is reflected by a standardization of religious products leading to theological relativism and an indifferent ecumenism. This is the core of Berger’s secularization thesis: pluralism causes competition which causes demand orientation which itself causes relativism which finally leads to secularization. Although Berger acknowledges that standardization is accompanied by differentiation, the latter remains a weak counterforce against the isomorphic powers of the religious market.

Today, Berger himself admits to have over-emphasized the role of secularization (Berger 1998). His concession is symptomatic for a general fallback in the theory of secularization. This fallback can be described in a twofold way as a territorial and heuristic “enclavism.” The *territorial* fallback can be captured in one term: American exceptionalism. As the hypothesis of religious decay had been obviously falsified by the religious vitality in the USA (Finke and Stark 2000) and Latin America (Martin 1993), scholars of secularization decided that their theory should no longer cover America as it had proved to be an exceptional case. Instead, Europe was depicted as the cradle of religious decline, as it were, the rescuing harbour of the secularization thesis (the status of a theory can not longer be claimed). In fact, the academic battle about the secularization of Europe is not yet decided (Iannaccone and Stark 1994; Bruce 1999, 2000), although there appear to be further casualties: the decay of religion is meanwhile mainly situated in Scandinavia, which provides a unique setting of social-democratic government, an elaborated

welfare-state and state churches. As a “Scandinavianization” has thus replaced the Europeanization of religious decay, the territorial fallback of secularization theory is underlined by a logic of shrinking theoretical validity.

The *heuristic fallback* on the other hand is embodied in manifold theses of religious privatization. These scholars claim that religion has moved from the very public to the intimate sphere of private households, thus losing its formative power on social reality. As Peter Berger (1967:134) puts it, “religion manifests itself as public rhetoric and private virtue. In other words, in so far as religion is common it lacks ‘reality,’ and in so far as it is ‘real’ it lacks commonality.” For Berger religion can only be “realized” in its ethical dimension (virtue) whereas it remains somehow virtual in its (theo-)logical dimension. This association of virtuality and religious rhetoric shows a remarkable ignorance of the discursive power of religion and religious concepts. This is all the more astonishing as discourse analysis was already a vital part of Berger’s academic *zeitgeist*. In 1973, when the German translation of “The Sacred Canopy” was published, Jürgen Habermas heavily emphasized the power of political discourse in his famous book “Legitimation Crisis.” Thus, the diagnosis of religious privatization is based on a systematic overestimation of the ethical dimension of religion and an underestimation of its discursive implications. To explain this bias through a systematic contextualization of Berger and his work would be an interesting and worthwhile enterprise. Here, it may only be suggested that Berger’s appreciation of religious virtue combines both a religious (Protestant) and an academic (sociological) bias.

The *heuristic fallback* of secularization theory therefore means turning from a general vision of religious decay to a diagnosis of the decline of religious institutions, labelled as privatization. Declining church-attendance rates and constant levels of personal religiosity (Iannaccone and Stark 1994:245: “believe in God; religious person”) are recently quoted as empirical evidence for this phenomenon. This “hiatus” between the institutional and the individual level of religion



was famously characterized by Grace Davie as “believing without belonging” (Davie 1990).

Taking into account this extensive (territorial and heuristic) fall-back of theories of religious decay it may be justified to wonder, what finally remains from the universal social diagnosis of secularization. A polemical answer could be that an up-to-date version of secularization theory should deal with religious privatization in Scandinavia. It would, however, be a big mistake to replace a fundamentally apologetic theory of religious decay (Iannaccone and Stark 1994:231) with a (no less apologetic) theory of that theory’s own decay. Instead, we should deal with some alternative approaches that strive to describe and explain religious change in modern societies: the Rational-Choice-School within the American sociology of religion (in the following referred to as economical analysis of religion) and a social-psychological theory of values as held by Hans Joas.

Having evolved from the critique of the classical secularization theory, the rational-choice theory of religious change nevertheless shares some of its premises: analogously to the former it assumes that religious monopolies have faded, thus giving room for a pluralistic situation and, as a consequence, competition. A market of religions now mediates the supply and demand for “religious goods.” Now, here is the break between rational-choice and secularization theory: while Berger argues that the uniformity of preferences on the demand side causes a competitive isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), which will finally lead to relativism and the weakening of religion, the rational-choice approach uses a market model from economic theory and mainly focuses on the supply side, the religious firms.

The loss of officially guaranteed religious monopolies is conceived as a deregulation of the religious market, which leads to specialization and innovation (Berger, on the contrary, claimed that competition would cause standardization and relativism). Thus, religion as such is vitalized as religious firms are forced to offer new and high quality religious products, thereby opening up new potentials of religious

demand. This process is paralleled by a certain decay of the formerly monopolized (state-) religious institutions and their social impact. The economic analysis of religion characterizes this decay as *desacralization* and argues that earlier scholars of religious decay had confused secularization and desacralization. The latter, however, is neither inevitable nor irreversible. Instead, religious change (in its collective, institutional or social dimension) can generally be conceived to take place between the ideal-typical poles of sect (high social cohesion; high commitment; high tension with the environment) and church (lower social cohesion; lower commitment; lower tension with the environment). Thus, an interface is created with regard to earlier debates in the sociology of religion (Weber 2002b [1906]; Troeltsch 1961 [1922]) and the linear logic of the grounding discourse of modernization is replaced by a cyclic-conjunctural one.

Of course, such an economic interpretation of religion did not remain uncontested. Steven Bruce calls the application of the economic paradigm an “inappropriate aping of the methods of other disciplines” and underlines that “the role of religion in ethnic and national conflict — cannot be expressed in numbers” (Bruce 2000:33). Instead, Bruce tries to challenge the rational-choice-explanation with its own means (Bruce 1999, 2000). It would be a mistake to draw a universal model of explanation for religious economies from the experiences of religious vitality in the USA. Such a generalization would neglect the fundamentally different historical and psychological determinants in Europe and the US. Here, the argument of theoretical enclavism is turned back against its original proponents: the critics of secularization theory.

The first, more substantial argument made by Bruce is also applied by sociological scholars of values. Hans Joas notes that it is not the mere fact of religious pluralism which accounts for the vitality of the religious market but rather the institutionalization of pluralism as a value in itself (Joas 2004:42). Therefore, it would be mistaken to regard a radical deregulation of religious markets as a cure-all for religious prosperity. Instead, deregulation has to be conceived as an

expression of the *value* of pluralism. Another criticism focuses on religious preferences and religious choice. From the perspective of social psychology it is held that belief is not a matter of choice but is based on value-orientations and experiences of self-transcendence that are characterized not by active choice but by passivity and devotion (Joas 2004:43).

To conclude this theoretical part of our discussion it may be said that there has been a fundamental shift from theories of religious decay to theories of religious change, whether preference- or value-oriented. Naturally, this shift in the academic consciousness of religion is an expression of its societal role having altered. Thus, processes of societal and political transformation regarding religion have to be studied carefully if one wants to acquire a better understanding of its role in modern industrialized societies. The welfare reform in the USA calls religious communities back to the “agora” and may serve as an example both of political and societal impulses towards religion. As the reform is all about the public dimension of institutionalized religion, it may also be reasonable to question the “last bastion” of secularization theory: the privatization and intimization of religion. What then of “American exceptionalism”? Certainly, the official call for religious welfare as embodied in the reform stands within a unique setting of state- and religious culture. Nevertheless, the so called Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP), which represent the basic idea of the reform, are becoming more and more important in Europe as well, both on a national and supranational level of policy-making. The careful observation and analysis of these developments therefore not only yields academic insights but may be crucial to the development of political strategies in a very practical sense.

## II. *Charitable Choice*

### 1. From Private to Public Welfare — and Back Again

In 1996 the Clinton Government initiated a comprehensive reform of social welfare. The legislative act was called “Personal Responsibility

and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act” (PRWORA).<sup>1</sup> The underlying political programme is quite clear: it is aimed at strengthening personal at the cost of public responsibility and to bring recipients of social welfare back to work. As the reform exhales the spirit of privatization (Minow 2003) and decentralization, it marks a break if not a turning point in the social-political history of the USA: after the Great Depression Roosevelt’s New-Deal-politics focused on the structural conditions for poverty and social inequality as it had become obvious that personal virtue alone could not prevent the suffering created by the economic crisis. Thus, the *public* responsibility for social welfare was stressed, and the normative, *moral* dimension was no longer addressed by social workers:

in the nineteenth century . . . effective help for poor persons and families was understood in *normative* terms and dealt with *choices* and *behaviour*. . . . The professionalization of social work delegitimated such moral or normative concerns. (Carlson-Thies 2001:112; emphasis added)

70 years later we see a contrary development: moral reform instead of social reform, or to put it metaphorically: a “hand up” for the poor instead of a “hand out” to them is now the signal given. Stanley Carlson-Thies mentions three political trends that have led to the current social-political transformation: first, “the growing belief . . . that much of government welfare effort and expenditure had done little good and sometimes even did harm to the poor”; second, “a renewed appreciation that poverty can have behavioural as well as economic roots”; and finally, “the upsurge of interest in civil society and volunteerism” (2001:116). Therefore, welfare had to be decentralized, its purpose was to bring about a shift “from income maintenance to empowerment for self-sufficiency” and collaboration with civil society had to be strengthened. In this context, Carlson-Thies specifically emphasizes the role of religious organizations.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive account of “Charitable Choice” and its historical, political and legal foundations, institutionalization and evaluation, see Nagel 2006.

## 2. “Charitable Choice” and “Faith-Based-Initiative”

“Charitable Choice” and “Faith-Based-Initiative” are legislative and administrative expressions of the political idea that religious organizations should be included into the public welfare system. Charitable Choice is the headline of the important and heavily debated section 104 of the PRWORA. Again, the name contains the programme: the choice of religious charities must neither be prohibited within the public welfare system nor may it be obligatory. Within this regulative framework four judicial aspects can be distinguished:

**Equal treatment:** religious organizations must not be discriminated because of their religious character when applying for government contracts.

**Religious Identity:** the religious character of these organizations must not be censored or otherwise diminished. They may apply religious criteria when recruiting their staff.

**Protection of Recipients:** recipients must not be denied services for religious reasons nor may they be forced or urged to participate in religious action.

**Freedom of Choice:** there has to be a comparable non-religious alternative, which recipients may choose in case they feel restricted in their (negative) religious freedom.

While the original Charitable-Choice-legislation was enacted under Clinton, the Bush administration took considerable efforts to elaborate its legislative foundations (House Resolution 7 from 2001) and to force its administrative implementation. In the course of the so called Faith-Based-Initiative several federal organizations were created to coordinate and audit the implementation of the reform. At their centre is the “White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives” (OFBCI), complemented by “executive department centers” in the political Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Education as well as Agriculture and International Affairs (added in 2002 by executive order). The Faith-Based-Initiative is guided by a central metaphor: to

create a “level playing field,” i.e. to cut down bureaucratic barriers for religious providers of social welfare. For this reason, the OFBCI established the so called Compassion Capital Fund to support religious grassroots organizations in obtaining government contracts. Most of the fund is spent for intermediate organizations which support smaller grassroots in the application procedure. A smaller part of the money is reserved for research on “best practices.”

The continuity of “faith-based-politics” from Clinton to Bush is astonishing. While under Clinton “Charitable Choice” was just one part of a more comprehensive reform of social welfare, it was inflated to a political doctrine under the Bush government: Compassionate Conservatism. As President Bush himself put it: “It is compassionate to actively help our citizens in need. It is conservative to insist on accountability and results. This approach of hope and optimism will make a real difference in people’s lives” (Bush 2002). Political scientists have treated Compassionate Conservatism as an issue of electoral strategy: the former focus on the so called “moral issues” had attracted voters with a strict sense of religion, in particular evangelicals, at the same time repelling moderate voters. Thus, especially urban middle-class strata and women turned to the Democratic Party with its centrist profile (Oldopp and Praetorius 2002:42). The new political doctrine tries to settle on religious topics without polarizing and repelling important electoral groups. The label “Compassionate” expresses social political relevance and responsibility, while “Conservatism” stands for result-orientation and rigid measures of quality assurance.

### III. *Are Faith-Based Organizations More Efficient Than Others?*

The proponents of Charitable-Choice and the Faith-Based Initiative claim that religious organizations provide welfare services more efficiently than others. Due to their holistic approach Faith-Based Organizations are said to be better suited to provide personal transformation of the recipients, thus granting effectiveness of welfare efforts. Chaves and Tsitsos refer to manifold examples where reli-

gious agencies are attributed with personal, relational approaches, breathing the warmth of compassion, whereas government agencies are associated with the bureaucratic apparatus (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001:3ff.).

The question of efficiency and effectiveness is crucial for the political legitimacy of Charitable Choice, which creates a powerful normative frame for evaluative research in this sector. In the following, I will point out some practical and theoretical problems of evaluation and conclude with an assessment of the results regarding the efficiency of faith-based providers.

### 1. Practical Problems

Funding is a basic practical problem for evaluative research: surveys have to be carefully planned and carried out, the resulting data have to be analysed and presented. Public authorities usually lack the staff and competence to perform such research, external institutes, however, are costly. Some authors argue that this is a principal obstacle to the welfare reform (Rosenthal 2003:3).

Another problem is the fundamental scepticism of religious organizations towards external interference (Modesto 2003:4). Moreover, the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment protects religious groups from public intervention (excessive entanglement). Thus, legal uncertainty may as well impede evaluative research (Orr and Spoto 2003:9). As a consequence, only internally collected data can be obtained, which may either be biased due to social desirability or simply not relevant for the respective evaluative design.

Generating valid data is generally problematic as the staffs of FBOs and Congregations are not accustomed to handling highly standardized procedures of data collection (Modesto 2003:6). Thus, evaluations are often led by a pre-cognitive “folk wisdom,” which has to be situated in a broader theoretical framework (Myers 2003:6). In general, evaluators argue that there is too much “anecdotal information” and too little quantitative data. The latter, however, is important for the external legitimacy of evaluative research (Skaff 2003:8f.).

In conclusion, the realization of evaluative research faces a fundamental problem: each step of the evaluation, be it conception (categories, operationalization), data collection, data analysis or the presentation and implementation of results, is embedded in a network of crosscutting interests: the evaluated organization needs positive results to continue the existing programs or expand their services, while a research institute wants to present a consistent and reliable research design in order to acquire further commissions and at the same time has to take into consideration the interests of the commissioner. Finally, public authorities have to prove both their social political competence and the general success of Compassionate Conservatism.

## 2. Theoretical Problems

Theoretical problems of evaluative research may refer to the research design, the research population and sampling procedure, namely the selection of the experimental and the matching group, the analytical isolation of effects, selection of the relevant sampling level, comparison of different types of programmes, and finally the measurement of the religious component.

Experimental and matching group: the simplest way to measure the effectiveness of social service programmes would be to compare a group of people exposed to the intervention with a matching group without this experimental stimulus. This experimental design assumes a random selection of people for both groups, which is impossible due to the self-selective principle of Charitable Choice. The choice logic causes a selection bias leading to an uneven comparison. For instance, proponents of the Faith-Based Initiative argue that FBOs address a “hardest-to-serve-population” and thus lower the expectations towards these organizations, which may lead to an overestimation of their impact.

Isolation of effects: unlike in a laboratory, the diffuse social reality of welfare programmes does not allow to isolate certain effects and to draw *ceteris paribus*-conclusions. Instead, it must be taken into account that relevant effects are either reinforced by intervening or



interacting influences (confounded effects), or weakened (suppression). As welfare recipients use to attend different programmes of different providers, which are partly programmatically *meant* to interact and build on each other, the interesting effects have to be extrapolated, e.g. by partialization or multivariate regression. Here, micro-level-analysis has strong analytical advantages for the separation of effects, as Wuthnow et al. have demonstrated in their work on provider-portfolios of single recipients (Wuthnow et al. 2003:4).

Sampling level: This leads to the question on which level the success of religious welfare-services can best be measured. Should the contentment of the *recipients* be taken into account (micro-level), the effectiveness of single *programmes* (meso-level), or the efficiency of religious *organizations* or even *organizational fields*? An answer to this question strongly depends on the background and interest of the evaluative approach: evaluations on a federal or national level, for instance, will focus on organizations rather than programmes for pragmatic reasons (reduction of data complexity) (Campbell et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2002). Smaller-scope-studies usually analyse welfare programmes (Yancey et al. 2003). Strangely enough, there is a lack of (quantitative) micro-level-analysis, except for the study of Wuthnow et al. mentioned above.

Types of programmes: evaluative research has to consider different types of welfare programmes. Laura Skaff suggests differentiating between ongoing and sequential programmes according to their inner logic. In *ongoing* programmes welfare services remain constant as to their kind and amount (e.g. housing or food programmes). Thus, data should be collected after a certain period of time (usually 90 days). In contrast, *sequential* programmes are based on a certain trail of services of different kinds with fixed interim-goals (e.g. drug rehabilitation). Led by the assumption that the desired outcome will not be reached until the last step of the programme is completed, evaluative research can here only be applied to persons who have gone through the whole programme. At the same time, the dropout rate should be documented for evaluative reasons (Skaff 2003:8).

Moreover, programmes may be distinguished by the intensity of their religious attachment. Green and Sherman build an ordinal scale with the items “not relevant,” “passive,” “invitational,” “relational,” “integrated,” and “mandatory” according to the explicitness of religious belief and commitment in the social services (Green and Sherman 2003:16).

Modelling the faith component: are religious organizations more effective and more efficient than others? The comparative logic of this research question yields to a basic problem of the sociology of religion: how can religious organizations be distinguished from “secular” ones? What is the specific difference between Faith-Based-Organizations (FBOs) and other Non-profit-Organizations (NPOs)?

First of all, the “Varieties of Faith-Related Agencies” (Smith and Sosin 2001) themselves have to be explored, that is: the differences *within* the field of “religious” organizations with regard to their size, age, location, services and funding have to be categorized (Jeavons 2003). Here, the most important distinction to be made is that between FBOs and Congregations. While Chaves and Tsitsos note that “Religious congregations — churches, synagogues, mosques — constitute only a subset of the ‘faith based organizations’” (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001:5; Working Group 2003:2), Jeavons argues that Congregations and FBOs have to be treated on an equal analytical level:

To be clear, I use the term ‘*religious organization*’ in this paper as an overarching category. Then, for purposes of constructing a more accurate and useful analysis, I distinguish between *congregations*, on the one hand, and religious services entities of various types, on the other, and refer to this latter group (sometimes) as ‘*faith-based organizations*.’” (Jeavons 2003:27; emphasis added)

Moreover, Jeavons provides us with some data to distinguish Congregations from FBOs; the data refer to size, age, activities and funding of religious organizations. As for their size, Congregations tend to be rather small (mean = 75 members), while FBOs — ranging from small grassroots to huge corporations such as Salvation Army — show a stronger variation. Age: Congregations appear to be older (mean = 69 years) than FBOs as the latter face more competition

for public funding and thus are exposed to higher fluctuation. As for their activities, FBOs tend to “. . . parallel other public benefit or advocacy organizations. There are many religious hospitals, colleges, schools, social service agencies, nursing homes, day care centers, and the like” (Jeavons 2003:33). Congregations, on the contrary, use to embed social services in their religious activities. The most significant difference, however, is about funding: while Congregations are mainly funded by donations (86%), and only marginally receive service fees or property-income (14%), FBOs, like other NPOs, receive fewer donations (mean = 20%, although there is significant variation from the Salvation Army [51%] to the Lutheran Social Services [10%]), and therefore depend on public funding (mean = 37%), service fees and other sources (ibid.). In an ideal-typical table, FBOs and Congregations may be contrasted against each other as follows:

**Table 1: Congregations vs. FBOs**

	Congregation	FBO
<b>Size</b>	(-) low variation	(-) high variation
<b>Age</b>	(+)	(-)
<b>Activities</b>	religious	social
<b>Funding</b>	donations	fees

For Jeavons, FBOs are thus related more to secular NPOs than to religious organizations in a narrow sense. For evaluative research, however, there is the challenge to differentiate between faith-based and secular nonprofits to compare their respective impact. In an explorative quantitative study Ebaugh et al. 2003 try to provide insights to this question. The authors compare religious and secular nonprofits with respect to self-identity, participants and leadership, material resources, products and organizational culture as well as information processing and decision making. Their results can be concluded as follows:

Table 2: NPOs vs. FBOs

		NPO	FBO
<b>Self Identity</b>		secular	religious
<b>Participants</b>		ambition/qualification	religious criteria
<b>Leadership</b>		formal qualification	formal qualification
<b>Resources</b>		public funding (+)	public funding (-)
<b>Products</b>	<b>Means</b>	secular	religious
	<b>Goals</b>	secular	secular
<b>Decision making</b>		“zweckrational”	“zweckrational” “wertrational”

*Self-identity* refers to name and mission statement of an organization. 75% of the FBOs have a religious name and allude to religion in their mission statement or logo. Four out of five FBOs use one of these features to express their religious self-identity (Ebaugh et al. 2003:422). As to *leadership*, both FBOs and NPOs employ their managerial staff according to its formal qualifications. Beside these executive or professional positions, however, FBOs tend to hire both staff and volunteers on the basis of their religious commitment: “Nearly half of all faith-based agencies take religious affiliation into account when making hiring decisions, and nearly three quarters recruit staff from congregations” (ibid.:423). As far as *material resources* are concerned, secular agencies receive significant government funding while FBOs have to rely on alternative sources, such as “congregations and other religious organizations.” Thus, there appear to exist networks formed of congregations and FBOs, a fact which sheds new light on the distinction between these types of religious organization suggested by Jeavons (2003). As for the *products*, i.e. the range of direct services delivered to clients, there is little difference between faith-based and secular providers: both deliver relational services to encourage the personal transformation of their clients and thus align themselves with the so called “friendly visitor”-paradigm of social work. However, in faith-based agencies this approach rests on an organizational culture “thoroughly imbued with religious values in terms of staff interaction with clients” (Ebaugh et al. 2003:423). Therefore, faith-based

and secular services do not differ in their goals (and obviously not in their outcomes as the authors suggest) but apply different means to reach them. The comparative factor *decision making* parallels the results concerning leadership. Not surprisingly, “religious and secular agencies differ significantly on the centrality of religious leadership to organizational functioning, but not in their reliance on business leaders and executive management in board operations. In other words, both types of agencies rely on secular expertise, but faith-based ones rely as well on spiritual expertise to reach decisions” (ibid.). Thus, there seem to be two strains of decision making which follow different logics. In the Weberian terminology the secular strain might be associated with a “zweckrational” motivation of social action while faith-based decision making also involves “wertrational” motivations.

To return to the original question: evaluative research sets a requirement for modelling the *faith component*, which calls for a comparison within the set of religious organizations and between religious and secular agencies. Such a comparison may focus on certain organisational characteristics to measure and scale the faith-component, and such characteristics have been mentioned and backed up with some empirical evidence above. Bielefeld et al. provide a further operationalization of these terms, creating 15 dummy variables indicating “visible” or “implicit” religiosity of an organization (2003:2f.). The authors distinguish between moderate religious impact, when one to four items apply, and strong religious impact when five to seven items apply. A more differentiated scale of organisational religiosity is provided by the “Working Group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives,” which has received broad scholarly recognition (Working Group 2002:30f.; 2003:34f.):

**secular < faith-secular partnership < faith background <  
faith affiliated < faith centred < faith permeated  
[organizations]**

Despite the numerous practical and theoretical problems, evaluative research *is* conducted both by public authorities, research

institutions and FBOs themselves. Although results differ considerably in their analytical quality and scope, they provide some preliminary insights. After all, the general claim that FBOs are more effective than other social service providers has proved to be rather a politically pampered myth than social reality. Instead, both panel- and cross-section-research has shown that the religious factor by itself cannot account for much of the variation of service output (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Modesto 2003; for a contrary view: Johnson et al. 2002). Nevertheless there is little doubt that religion somehow matters. Thus, the evaluative question shifts from proving the dogmatic claim that religious agencies are more effective providers of social services to their special potentials.

First, it seems that FBOs appeal to another *population* of recipients than secular agencies. In a large-scale evaluation of the implementation of Charitable Choice in California more than 75% of the FBOs report that their participants have not previously attended welfare programmes or have done so only rarely (Campbell et al. 2003:9f.). Other findings suggest that religious programmes might address a “hardest-to-serve-population” (Modesto 2003:8).

Second, FBOs might have a comparative advantage in specific *areas* of social welfare. Johnson et al. report a lower rate of recidivism of prison inmates in two different faith-based programmes. Moreover, the authors suggest that participants of a faith-based drug treatment programme “were more likely to remain sober and maintain employment” than others (Johnson et al. 2003:19f.). It has to be mentioned, however, that the rehabilitation programme in question (Teen Challenge) was heavily criticized by other scholars for its high dropout rate (Rosenthal 2003:8f.) and ethnocentric practice of Christian religion (Plaskow 2002:864).

Third, there is no evidence of FBOs alone being more effective. However, some authors point to *faith-secular partnerships* and thus to the fruitful collaboration of faith-based and secular providers. Such a cooperation does not threaten the distinctiveness or effectiveness of FBOs but promises to meet many of the ambitious expectations about

the impact of faith-based service agencies. (Chaves and Tsitsos 2002:29f.).

Fourth, besides cooperation, FBOs obviously encourage the *differentiation* within welfare-networks as to their specific abilities and constraints. In their brilliant micro-level-analysis, Wuthnow et al. account for a significant specialization as to single welfare *issues*: e.g. FBOs prove most attractive for emotional support while financial aid, housing and food is rather sought from government agencies (Wuthnow et al. 2003).

#### IV. Theoretical Outlook

Religious institutions matter. But how? Secularization theory can hardly provide any answer to this question as it focuses on the private, intimate aspects of religion and neglects its social productivity. Rational-Choice theories of religious change, be they supply- or demand-oriented, specify general macro-mechanisms, such as the deregulation of religious markets and universal micro-mechanisms like a reasonable balancing of religious and other preferences. However, they cannot systematically model the exchange-relationships involved in religious transactions as they lack a substantial concept of the religious good.

The debate about the US welfare reform, especially with respect to evaluative research, now urges the sociology of religion to adapt its theoretical apparatus. On the *macro-level* the social productivity of religion has to be recognized, and the interaction of religious and other welfare institutions, be it cooperation or competition, needs to be captured by means of a comprehensive organizational theory. Moreover, the dynamics within institutional fields must be taken into account, i.e. the configuration of welfare networks and processes of convergence (adaptation) or divergence (specialization). On the *micro-level* the exchange relations between welfare agencies and recipients have to be accounted for in terms of resources: who receives which kind of material or non-material goods from whom to which end?

Can faith-based providers be more effective because they provide access to privileged networks? How can these networks themselves profit from this situation?

To meet these theoretical demands a glance at recent debates within sociology, political science and economics might be helpful. I want to address neo-institutionalist and neo-capital theory as an important and necessary scope-extension for religious studies as both approaches provide crucial heuristic and explanative insights not only for the religious component of the welfare reform but for the analytic treatment of religious institutions as such. The “double-neo” language may suggest an element of academic fashion and indeed both concepts have already been on the sociological agenda. Nevertheless, they have been widely neglected in the study of religion since secularization theory suggested that religion was no longer a matter of institutions and ethereal postmodern approaches have taught that religion was neither a matter of goods nor of reasoning and thus tended to dissolve it into mere language games.

### 1. Neo-institutionalist Approaches

As far as neo-institutionalism is concerned I want to sketch two different streams to address two different points brought up by the FBO-debate: convergence and divergence within organisational fields.

#### a. Convergence and Institutional Isomorphism

Can you have “Government Shekels without Government Shackles” (Bielefeld and Kennedy 2002)? Convergence of FBOs is discussed in terms of rationalization, standardization and bureaucratization of religious organizations due to their cooperation with public authorities. Financial accountability and pressures of efficiency mediated by evaluations, it is said, are the central mechanisms of this process: “[T]he more a religious organization adapts modern, hierarchical, bureaucratic forms, the more difficult it is to maintain and protect its religious identity and uniqueness” (Vanderwoerd 2003:3).

Theoretically, these phenomena can be depicted by the concept of institutional isomorphism from DiMaggio and Powell, which is already



applied by some FBO-scholars (Smith and Sosin 2001; Vanderwoerd 2003). Institutional isomorphism means convergence within organizational fields due to coercive, mimetic and normative means of adaptation. *Coercive* isomorphism means adaptation due to formal or informal pressures or generalized expectations. If an FBO wants to receive public money it has to satisfy the public conditions for financial accountability and must guard the Charitable-Choice-legislation, i.e. must abstain from “inherently religious activities” (worship, instruction, or proselytization) and must not discriminate against recipients for religious reasons. *Mimetic* isomorphism points to the adaptation of technologies or organizational procedures. Here, the driving forces are not distinctive exterior coercive pressures but decisions within an organization to model itself after organizations it perceives as successful. There is hardly any literature on FBOs voluntarily adapting to secular welfare providers; however, the important guidance-document on Charitable-Choice explicitly recommends religious organizations to outsource their welfare-programmes to a separate legal entity and thus to parallel secular service providers (Guidance Document 2002:10). *Normative* isomorphism, finally, signifies adaptation mediated by processes of professionalization. A uniform service class in the executive and managerial positions sets up a particular professional culture, which aspirants have to adopt. Thus, institutional convergence can be mediated by recruiting or even anticipatory socialization. Although FBOs may apply religious criteria when they recruit new staff, just like secular nonprofits they choose their managerial staff according to formal qualifications, thus exposing themselves to normative isomorphism (see above).

Smith and Sosin (2001) provide the most elaborate application of Institutional Isomorphism for FBOs. They try to render the “Varieties of faith-related agencies” by modelling their “religious coupling” according to the three dimensions resources (coercive), authority (normative) and culture (mimetic):

[T]he impact of faith on the structure of service delivery should generally vary with the degree of coupling on each dimension. The tighter the coupling to

religion, the more an agency's social organisation reflects the demands of that religion. (Smith and Sosin 2001:656)

Although heuristically useful, the application of this model remains a little bit vague as resources, authority and culture must be regarded as strongly interdependent. Empirically more fruitful is the qualitative approach of Jim Vanderwoerd who examines coercive isomorphism and asks "how faith-based social services organizations manage secular pressures associated with government funding." Religious organizations have to handle a unique tension between their religious identity and public measures of accountability. Vanderwoerd suggests that this "dual accountability" may be solved by a religious contextualization of the secular influences:

[W]hen an organisation is able to cultivate high levels of commitment to religious values and principles, it appears able to withstand an enormous amount of secular influences [. . .]. Further, such secular influences are not avoided as threats, but are sought precisely because of their capacity to enable the organisation to fulfil its religiously motivated mission. (Vanderwoerd 2003:10)

In conclusion, the concept of Institutional Isomorphism may describe and explain organizational convergence such as processes of bureaucratization and rationalization of FBOs in both their symbolic and their material dimensions.

#### b. Divergence and Institution Analysis

But what about the different types of religious and non-religious service providers and their configuration in welfare networks that rests on cooperation and specialization? To explain institutional divergence we may deploy the concept of Institution Analysis developed by Rainer Lepsius. In his Weberian approach, Lepsius provides a theoretical framework to describe both institutional constitution and interinstitutional interaction. In a narrow sense, institutions are defined as social structures that make social values relevant for individual action. The question therefore is how institutions make ideas coagulate to action (Lepsius 1995:394). The author specifies six institutional dimensions: ideas, criteria of rationality, contexts of validity, sanctions, management of contingencies and interinstitutional relations. An initial *idea*

(“Leitidee”) is operationalized into *norms of action*, the compliance with which is considered rational (“Rationalitätskriterien”). In the process of institutionalization, ideas not only have to be concretized but their *context of validity* (“Geltungskontext”) has to be defined (Lepsius 1997:59). In reality, there will usually be a syncretism of ideas in a given situation, accounting for different alternatives of action which are all regarded as rational with regard to the respective ideas they realize.

To give an example, Charitable Choice can be seen as an expression that the ideas of social welfare have changed: the idea of public responsibility for welfare which has been culturally meaningful (“kulturbedeutsam”) since the Great Depression, is now being replaced by an idea of communal or private responsibility. The new criteria of rationality are formulated in the Charitable-Choice-legislation: efficiency, competition, equal treatment of religious organizations, protection of religious freedom. The context of (formal) validity is set by federal law.

As for their persistence and interaction, institutions may apply *sanctions* to realize and defend their context of validity. It should be reminded that institutional validity means the coagulation of norms into action. *Contingencies*, i.e. consequences of institutionally framed behaviour, be they intended or unintended, must either be processed within the rationality criteria of that institution or externalized, so as not to threaten the institutional legitimacy: “an institutionalised idea has all the more impact, the more it succeeds to externalise the contingencies connected with its validity” (Lepsius 1997:61; my translation). Obviously, there is a considerable potential of conflict between institutions. The last analytical dimension of Institution Analysis therefore captures the *mediating structures* between institutions, which may themselves be institutionalized (e.g. checks and balances).

Let us turn to Charitable Choice for an application: As the formal *context of validity* is set by federal law, it is backed with federal funding. The *sanction capacity* of Charitable Choice therefore rests on a dependency of the states on federal resources. The Pre-emption

Clause at the end of the Charitable-Choice-subsection protects the autonomy of the states by allowing them to handle the expenditure of state funds more restrictively. As soon as they use federal funding, however, it has to be spent according to federal legislature, i.e. the norms of action set by Charitable Choice. What then about *contingencies* and their externalization? The basic idea of Charitable Choice is to privatize and communalize welfare responsibility to increase efficiency and effectiveness of welfare efforts. Indigence is not regarded a matter of social structure but of personality. Moral reform has to replace structural reform, and religious organizations are especially apt to initiate and further the personal transformation of welfare recipients to enable them to self-sufficiency. Thus, structural conditions of poverty and neediness are externalized from welfare to other institutions or, more likely, to the personal system of the poor. Moreover, the right of FBOs to hire staff according to religious criteria may lead to a de-professionalization in social work (Rosenthal 2003:9). Finally, the communalization of welfare may further social inequalities on the local level by creating or strengthening patronage structures. This clientelistic “informalization” of public welfare by local elites is the shadow of the politically induced lack of bureaucracy. These contingencies, the persistence of structural problems, de-professionalization of social work and welfare-patronage, cannot be processed in the internal logic of Charitable Choice: structural problems are contextualized personally, social work is contextualized as faith-based and formal administrative structures are informalized. The successful externalization of contingent issues, finally, creates a considerable potential of institutional *conflict*. Civil-rights-organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) argue that religious hiring discrimination harms fundamental principles of equality in favour of religious freedom. The *mediating structure* in this conflict is public debates and the judicial branch. The States argue that Charitable Choice would inadmissibly shrink their autonomy in questions of religion and extend Federal competence on the basis of decentralized block-grants (Oldopp and Prätorius 2002:41). This conflict is of course

inherent to the federalist system of the USA and institutionalized in terms of law, such as the Supremacy Clause (Federal law is supreme to State law) and the Pre-emption-Clause mentioned above.

## 2. Neo-capital Approaches

Indigence is the expression of lacking resources. An understanding of Charitable Choice and the special role religious organizations might play in social welfare therefore has to consider the exchange relations between providers and recipients and to model the variety of resources involved in welfare networks. Scholars of post-modernity have taken great efforts to de-materialize and de-rationalize human behaviour and have emphasized the discursive, semiotic aspects of human behaviour and social life. The “neo-capital” approaches try to incorporate this criticism by extending the theoretical scope to the “non tangible components” of capital (Storberg 2002). In modern societies, it is hypothesized, economics have turned to “Bourdieu-economics” (Svendsen and Svendsen 2003).

In Europe, it was Pierre Bourdieu who warned of a one-sided reduction of social processes and relationships to communication and interpretation (“Semiologism”) as well as to material determinants (“Economism”). For Bourdieu the hiatus between immaterial and material resources can be overcome by an extension of the idea of capital. In a general sense, capital is a productive factor from which further advantages can be drawn, be they economic (rent) or positional (reputation). Capital can therefore be conceived as material (economical capital, such as money and production facilities), immaterial (cultural capital, such as formal competencies and informal knowledge) and relational (social capital, such as institutionalized relationships). In terms of Charitable-Choice, FBOs will rarely provide recipients with money or food stamps but may increase their cultural capital by offering classes or moral instruction, or develop their social capital by providing access to congregational networks (Modesto 2003:7; Lockhart 2003:4ff.).

While the conflict theoretical model of Bourdieu focuses on the (illegitimate) reproduction of social inequality, there are two neo-capital

approaches from the USA that are more actor-centred: Gary Becker models people and their skills and competences as investive resources.<sup>2</sup> The human being is made into an enterprise and it is in the labour market where the respective stocks are traded. More sociologically, James Coleman defines social capital as “a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure” (Coleman 1990:98). Thus, social capital may take various forms of social relations, such as obligation or expectation, trust, information, norms and sanctions, power and formal organization (ibid.). This American notion of social capital can be differentiated with regard to the relationship of capital and actors. The crucial question is: does social capital *evolve from* social interactions or does it *enable* these interactions? On the one hand, the actors create relationships of trust and obligation in course of interaction. On the other hand, interaction itself requires a fundament of basic orientation, such as shared values. As for its sources (factual interaction/external values) Robert Jackman calls the first understanding of social capital endogenous and the latter exogenous (Jackman and Miller 1998:55ff.). This differentiation is important in order to understand Charitable Choice: the value-centred, exogenous view of social capital can be linked to a communitarian discourse within the debate on the welfare reform. Faith is seen as embodying norms, trust and obligation, and FBOs, as it were, are depicted as factories of social capital:

---

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Becker's theorem of human capital have both been adapted for religious studies. Iannaccone 1997 defines **religious capital** as “a person's accumulated stock of religious knowledge, skills, and sensitivities” (32) and explicitly joins the human capital model (33). In contrast, Verter 2003 conceives **spiritual capital** to be positional and competitive and thus proposes a more conflict theoretical model like that suggested by Bourdieu. More recently, another notion of spiritual capital has been developed, which focuses on norms and trust rather than knowledge or preferences and is related to the concept of social capital as developed by Robert Putnam 2000. See [http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual\\_capital/index.asp](http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual_capital/index.asp) [26/06/2005].

Faith communities, through their values, engender a sense of belonging which motivates people to get involved in their communities. Through this we see that 'faith' forms the impetus for social capital formation. (Lukka 2003:4)

In this communitarian understanding the perspective on Charitable Choice has shifted from a mere matter of welfare to the fundamental question of social integration to fight the dissociative powers of modernization. The endogenous view, on the contrary, focuses on support networks within welfare programmes and tries to elaborate the "bridges" (relations) and the "cargo" (resources) in these networks, such as

Employment information . . . , material goods and services, training to develop human and cultural capital, social support and status. . . . In addition to these above resources, faith-based programs may also provide training in religious capital, such as knowledge and skills in sacred texts, theology and worship practices . . . , which can be used to help clients build social ties in religious congregations and obtain resources through these ties. (Lockhart 2003:4f.)

A synthesis of the European and the American strain of neo-capital-theory is provided by the German sociologist Hartmut Esser. He implements neo-capital into his general subjective expected utility-theory to model the "opportunities and restrictions" as central conditions for action. In this sense, capital means "the accumulated and controlled amount of intermediate goods to produce social recognition and physical well-being" (Esser 2000:212; my translation). For Esser, neo-capital may have six basic forms: economical, human, cultural, institutional, political and social capital. *Human capital* means formal education in a more narrow sense, while *cultural capital* sticks to non-formal abilities and knowledge, such as good or bad taste. *Institutional and political capital* are special forms of social capital where the actor may profit or be impeded by his attachment to an institution or party. Esser's concept seems particularly apt for a study of Charitable Choice because (i) it is actor-centred and thus close to the logic of choice; (ii) it is endogenous and thus accessible to empirical analysis; and (iii) it adopts important ideas from Bourdieu, but disregards the ideological bias based on his conflict theoretical axiomatic.

*V. Conclusion*

In his paradigmatic essay “Die ‘Objektivität’ sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis,” Max Weber (2002a[1904]:148f.) depicts social and cultural science as somehow nomadic disciplines which have to follow their topics across the pastures of cultural significance (“Kulturbedeutsamkeit”). The meadows of secularization theory and post-modernity are now grazed off. If religious studies want to play a role in the description, interpretation and explanation of religion in modern societies, it shall have to adjust its analytical apparatus. To this end, there are two main lessons taught by Charitable Choice: First, religion has not ceased to be institutional. Instead, we can see new types of religious social forms emerging and older ones adapting to a new social, political and economical environment. Religious groups, such as FBOs, are far more than helpmates of the modern secular state. They are genuinely political actors, be it by interest formation on the grassroots-level (faith-based community organising, see Wood 2003) or by lobbying efforts on the corporative level. As governance is increasingly externalized to societal actors, religious organizations will receive significant political power. The unbroken social productivity of religion calls for a systematic institutional and organizational theory of religion. This paper offers some preliminary thoughts on institutional convergence and divergence backed with applications from Charitable Choice. Convergence in organizational fields can be explained by means of Institutional Isomorphism: FBOs face adaptive pressures due to resource dependencies, public measures of accountability, a secular professional culture or a perceived lack of legitimacy. In contrast, the concept of Institution Analysis may capture institutional divergence: Charitable Choice reflects a shift of ideas in social welfare from public to private responsibility. Decentralization and communalization seem to be probate means to this aim and federal law and resources grant significant institutional impact. Consequences of the welfare reform, such as “moralization” of indigence, de-professionalization of social work and distributive “informalization,” cannot be processed in the institutional



context given. The externalization of these contingencies produce interinstitutional conflict, the mediation of which can in itself be institutionalized, e.g. by law.

Second, religion has not become idealized into mere mysticism. Religious organizations are involved in numerous exchange relations and handle vast monetary and human resources. Centuries after secularization (here: expropriation of the churches), religious organizations are resourceful and influential. Fees and donations represent a considerable source of economic capital: some three quarters of religious congregations finance more than 90% of their social activities themselves (Green and Sherman 2002:13). There is no empirical evidence that government funding of religious welfare efforts will diminish donations. A survey in Georgia suggests that more than 90% of the respondents would not alter their donations for such reasons, or would even increase their efforts (Horne et al. 2003:17). The immaterial capital of religious organizations is even more important. As mentioned above, many faith-based programmes are directed to increase the cultural capital of recipients by offering classes or moral instruction. Moreover, congregations can involve the substantial human capital of volunteers. As for social capital, religious organizations are heterogeneous social networks with a significant ability to mediate between various social strata (Lockhart 2003:6). Faith-based programmes may socialize welfare recipients into the normative and moral structure of these networks and provide them with access to their manifold resources (see above).

Religion in modern societies is institutional and resourceful instead of private and ethereal. Religious studies therefore has to free itself from the powerful narratives of secularization and post-modernity if they do not wish to be delegitimated in their heuristic and explanatory claims *vis-à-vis* other disciplines. Thus, the academic treatment of the incidents of 9/11 was monopolized by political scientists while the contribution of religious studies has been limited at best (see Kippenberg and Seidensticker 2004). In this paper neo-institutionalist and neo-capital-approaches have been introduced by means of a

current example: the welfare reform and the Faith-Based Initiative. Scholars of religion would be well advised not to consider this an usurpation of their subject but an interface of fruitful collaboration with sociology, political science and economics.

Institute for Empirical and  
Applied Sociology

ALEXANDER-KENNETH NAGEL

University of Bremen, P.O. Box 330440

28334 Bremen

Germany

anagel@empas.uni-bremen.de

## REFERENCES

Berger, Peter L.

1967 *The sacred canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of religion*. New York: Doubleday.

1998 "Protestantism and the quest for certainty." *The Christian Century* 115:782–796.

Bielefeld, Wolfgang, and Sheila S. Kennedy

2002 "Government Shekels without Government Shackles? The Administrative Challenges of Charitable Choice." *Public Administration Review* 62:4–11.

Bielefeld, Wolfgang, Laura Littlepage, and Rachel Thelin

2003 "Management Challenges of Faith-Influenced Providers of IMPACT Services." Spring Research Forum <[http://www.independentsector.org/PDFs/srf03/bielefeld\\_wolfgang.pdf](http://www.independentsector.org/PDFs/srf03/bielefeld_wolfgang.pdf)> [01/02/2006]

Bruce, Steve

1999 *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.

2000 "The Supply-Side Model of Religion: The Nordic and the Baltic States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39:32–46.

Bush, George W.

2002 Fact Sheet: Compassionate Conservatism. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020430.html>>[01/02/2006]

Campbell, David, Eric Glunt, Shel Bockman, Judith Little, Max Nieman, and Barbara W. Sirotnik

2003 "Evaluating the California Community and Faith Based Initiative." Spring

- Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/campbell.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/campbell.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Carlson-Thies, Stanley
- 2001 "Charitable Choice: Bringing Religion Back into American Welfare." *Journal of Policy History* 13:109–132.
- Chaves, Mark, and William Tsitsos
- 2001 "Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How they Do it, and With Whom." <[http://www.nonprofitresearch.org/usr\\_doc/Tsitsos%20Report.pdf](http://www.nonprofitresearch.org/usr_doc/Tsitsos%20Report.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Coleman, James S.
- 1990 *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Davie, Grace
- 1990 "Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?" *Social Compass* 3:455–469.
- DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell
- 1991 "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality." In W. Powell and P. DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 63–82.
- Ebaugh, Helen R., Janet S. Saltzman, Paula F. Pipes, and Martha Daniels
- 2003 "Where's the Religion? Distinguishing Faith-Based from Secular Social Service Agencies." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42:411–426.
- Esser, Hartmut
- 2000 *Soziologie: Spezielle Grundlagen*. Vol. 4: *Opportunitäten und Restriktionen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus
- Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark
- 2000 *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Green, John C., and Amy L. Sherman
- 2003 "Fruitful Collaborations: A Survey of Government-Funded Faith-Based Programs in 15 States." <[http://www.hudsonfaithincommunities.org/articles/fruitful\\_collab.pdf](http://www.hudsonfaithincommunities.org/articles/fruitful_collab.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Guidance Document
- 2002 *Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government*. White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. <[http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidance\\_document.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidance_document.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Horne, Christopher, van Slyke, David M, and Janet L. Johnson
- 2003 "Attitudes Towards Public Funding for Faith-Based Organizations and the Potential Impact on Private Giving". Spring Research Forum. <<http://www>

- religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\_spring\_research\_conference/horne.pdf> [01/02/2006]
- Iannaccone, Laurence R.
- 1997 "Rational Choice: Framework for the Scientific Study of Religion." In: L.A. Young (ed.), *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*. New York: Routledge.
- Iannaccone, Laurence R., and Rodney Stark
- 1994 "A Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the 'Secularization' of Europe." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33:230–252.
- Jackman, Robert W., and Ross Miller
- 1998 "Social Capital and Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 1:47–73.
- Jeavons, Thomas H.O.
- 2003 "The Vitality and Independence of Religious Organisations." *Society* 40:27–36.
- Joas, Hans
- 2004 *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz*. Freiburg: Herder
- Johnson, Byron R., Ralph B. Tompkins, and Derek Webb
- 2002 "Objective Hope: Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations. A Review of the Literature." Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society. <[http://www.manhattan-institute.org/crrucs\\_objective\\_hope.pdf](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/crrucs_objective_hope.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Kippenberg, Hans G., and Tilman Seidensticker
- 2004 *Terror im Dienste Gottes: Die 'Geistliche Anleitung' der Attentäter des 11. September 2001*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus.
- Lepsius, M. Rainer
- 1995 "Institutionenanalyse und Institutionenpolitik." In B. Nedelmann (ed.), *Politische Institutionen im Wandel* (Sonderheft 35 der Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie), Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 392–403.
- 1997 "Institutionalisierung und Deinstitutionalisierung von Rationalitätskriterien." In G. Göhler (ed.), *Institutionenwandel*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 57–69.
- Lockhart, William H.
- 2003 "Specifying the Bridges and the Cargo: Social Capital, Faith-Based Programs and the Poor." Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/lockhart.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/lockhart.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Lukka, Priya
- 2003 "Energy for Change?: How Faith-Based Volunteering is Developing Social

- Capital and Community Life in the UK.” Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/lukka.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/lukka.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Martin, David
- 1993 *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Minow, Martha
- 2003 “Symposium: Public Values in an Era of Privatization: Public and Private Partnerships: Accounting for the New Religion.” *Harvard Law Review* 116:1229–1270.
- Modesto, Kevin F.
- 2003 “Taken on Faith? Preliminary Findings of an Outcomes Evaluation of a Faith-Based Welfare to Work Program.” Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/modesto.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/modesto.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Myers, Valerie L.
- 2003 “Planning and Evaluating Faith-Based Interventions: A Framework to Close the Theory-Practice Divide.” Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/myers.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/myers.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Nagel, Alexander-Kenneth
- 2006 *Charitable Choice: Religiöse Institutionalisierung im öffentlichen Raum. Religion und Sozialpolitik in den USA*. Münster: LIT. [Forthcoming.]
- Oldopp, Birgit, and Rainer Prätorius
- 2002 “‘Faith Based Initiative’: Ein Neuansatz in der U.S.-Sozialpolitik und seine Hintergründe.” *Zeitschrift für Sozialreform* 48:28–52.
- Orr, John, and Peter Spoto
- 2003 “Promising Practices: Implementing Charitable Choice in California.” Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/orr.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/orr.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Plaskow, Judith
- 2002 “Whose Initiative? Whose Faith?” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70:863–867.
- Putnam, Robert D.
- 2000 *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Rosenthal, Marguerite G.
- 2003 “Faith-Based Social Services and the Role of the State.” Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/rosenthal.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/rosenthal.pdf)> [01/02/2006]

Skaff, Laura

- 2003 "Faith and Facts: Measuring and Improving the Effectiveness of Social Services Delivery by Faith-Based Organizations." Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/skaff.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/skaff.pdf)> [01/02/2006]

Smith, Steven R., and Michael R. Sosin

- 2001 "The Varieties of Faith-Related Agencies." *Public Administration Review* 61:651–670.

Storberg, Julia

- 2002 "The Evolution of Capital Theory: A Critique of a Theory of Social Capital and Implications for HRD." *Human Resources Development Review* 1:468–499.

Svendsen, Gunnar, and Gert Svendsen

- 2003 "On the wealth of nations: Bourdieueconomics and social capital." *Theory and Society* 33:607–631.

Troeltsch, Ernst

- 1961 *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*. Scientia: Aalen. [First published 1922.]

Vanderwoerd, Jim R.

- 2003 "How Faith-Based Social Services Organizations Manage Secular Pressures Associated with Government Funding." Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/vanderwoerd.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/vanderwoerd.pdf)> [01/02/2006]

Verter, Bradford

- 2003 "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu." *Sociological Theory* 21:150–174.

Wallace, Anthony

- 1966 *Religion: An anthropological view*. New York: Random House.

Weber, Max

- 2002a "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis." In Max Weber, *Schriften 1894-1922*, ausgewählt von Dirk Käsler, Stuttgart: Kröner, 77–149. [First published 1904.]
- 2002b "'Kirchen' und 'Sekten.'" In Max Weber, *Schriften 1894-1922*, ausgewählt von Dirk Käsler, Stuttgart: Kröner, 227–242. [First published 1906.]

Wood, Richard L.

- 2003 "Public Religion and Faith-Based Activism" Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/wood.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/wood.pdf)> [01/02/2006]

Working Group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

- 2002 "Finding Common Ground: 29 Recommendations of the Working Group

- on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.” <<http://www.working-group.org/report.pdf>> [01/02/2006]
- 2003 “Harnessing Civic and Faith-Based Power to Fight Poverty.” <<http://www.working-group.org/Documents/SFCGbook2003Final.pdf>> [01/02/2006]
- Wuthnow, Robert, Conrad Hackett, and Becky Yang Hsu
- 2003 “The Effectiveness and Trustworthiness of Faith-Based and Other Service Organizations: A Study of Recipients’ Perceptions.” Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/wuthnow.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/wuthnow.pdf)> [01/02/2006]
- Yancey, Gaynor, Robin Rogers, Diana Garland, Ellen F. Netting, and Mary K. O’Connor
- 2003 “Identifying Effective Practices in Urban Faith-Based Social Service Programs: The Challenges of Designing and Conducting Research.” Spring Research Forum. <[http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003\\_spring\\_research\\_conference/yancy.pdf](http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/events/2003_spring_research_conference/yancy.pdf)> [01/02/2006]

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Epistemology of Perception: Gaṅgeśa's Tattvacintāmaṇi Jewel of Reflection on the Truth (About Epistemology). The Perception Chapter (pratyakṣa-khaṇḍa). Transliterated Text, Translation, and Philosophical Commentary* Stephen H. Phillips and N. S. Ramanuja Tatacharya. Series: Treasury of the Indic Sciences. — New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies 2005 (xiv + 723 p.) ISBN 0-9753734-3-9 (cloth). \$ 62.00/£ 40.00.

The American Institute of Buddhist Studies (New York), in affiliation with the Columbia University Center for Buddhist Studies and Tibet House US, has taken the fortunate initiative to publish a series English translations (*Treasury of the Indic Sciences*, in addition to its *Treasury of the Buddhist Sciences*) of texts pertaining to Indian schools of thought with which the Buddhists were engaged in dialogue and debate for over fifteen hundred years. The first book of the series presents a translation and philosophical commentary of the chapter on perception of Gaṅgeśa's masterwork *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, "Jewel of Reflection on the Truth (about Epistemology)," which is a watershed in Indian philosophy. This chapter, the first of this monumental work, deals in great detail with the first of the four *pramāṇa* ("means to right cognition," i.e. perception, inference, analogy, and testimony) accepted by the Hindu school of logic, epistemology and metaphysics, Nyāya. Gaṅgeśa, who lived around 1325 CE, is traditionally considered the founder of the "New" phase (*navya*) of the school, while the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* is the root text of Navya-Nyāya.

In the last few years, Gaṅgeśa's work has attracted considerable scholarly interest, as witnessed by the recent publication of several translations and studies. Phillips himself has extensively dealt with Gaṅgeśa's philosophy in his previous books, *Classical Indian Metaphysics: Refutations of Realism and the Emergence of "New Logic"* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court 1995; repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1997) and *Gaṅgeśa on the upādhi, The "Inferential Undercutting Condition."* *Introduction, Translation and Explanation* by Stephen H. Phillips and Ramanuja Tatacharya



(New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research 2002) as well as in a series of articles. Tatacharya, a traditional master of Nyāya, has edited the text of Gaṅgeśa (Tirupati 1972) followed in this translation and authored a number of books and papers in Sanskrit.

Phillips undertakes the difficult task of addressing a double readership: Sanskritists and philosophers, as he specifies in the preliminaries. On the one hand, this presupposes an introduction to the essentials of Nyāya and Navya-Nyāya philosophy and, on the other hand, a detailed discussion of the arguments throughout the commentary. Phillips signs a conceptual introduction to Gaṅgeśa and Nyāya philosophy, directed to the range of problems addressed in the translated text, which can be profitably studied by philosophers who have no access to the Sanskrit originals. It is divided into 6 parts: “An Epistemology of ‘Knowledge Sources,’” “Cognition,” “Inference,” “Ontological Categories,” “Causality,” “Predecessors and Opponents.” Particularly useful, especially for the reader not acquainted with the style of Indian philosophical debate, is the exposition in the preliminaries of the discourse structure of Indian classical philosophical texts, that is, the segmentation in *pūrva-pakṣa* (the prior position or an objection) and *siddhānta* (the established position answering the *pūrva-pakṣa*). By the same token, Gaṅgeśa is carefully placed in context by the presentation of his predecessors and opponents, with brief characterizations of persons and schools. Special accent is given to Mīmāṃsā, the main opponent. Like Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā upholds a realist ontology, and their main divergences concern epistemology.

Phillips explains from the very beginning his approach to rendering such a difficult text like Gaṅgeśa’s, but his methodological remarks on translation and interpretation are of general relevance. He has certainly made the right choice in his translative approach, described as “a maximalist strategy that is also in a way minimalist” with the aim “to translate Gaṅgeśa in sentences that read fluidly on the principle that as little as possible should be filled in (the minimalism) so long as a sentence is readable and makes plain Gaṅgeśa’s sense (the maximalism)” (1). The translation is very rigorous and consistent with the principles formulated in the preliminaries. Phillips has succeeded in giving a readable and flexible rendering and, at the same time, in being faithful to the text and precise with respect to the technical Sanskrit of Gaṅgeśa and thereby to the argumentation. The intricate technical terminology of Navya-Nyāya, forged

for the sake of precision of analysis, gains indeed its full status in the developments of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* and is subsequently taken up by other schools. Phillips thus avoids the too literal type of translation that generally follows from using words in one-to-one correspondence and that he calls “misguided literalness.” Indeed, and especially in the case of Navya-Nyāya texts, an excessively literal translation is not much more intelligible than the original Sanskrit. This can be noted in less fortunate translations of Navya-Nyāya, full, for instance, of “-ness” or “-hood” for the abstract terms in *tva-* or *tā* (or even “-hoodness” or “-nesshood” for *tvatva-*, etc.).

The commentary gives life to this difficult text. The points of background are carefully discussed and arguments reconstructed, sometimes in the light of commentators like Mathurānātha and Rucidatta, and occasionally along with the explanations of Ramanuja Tatacharya; the citations are traced to their source and the objectors are identified as much as possible. Although the translation is intelligible by itself, the commentary is nevertheless indispensable, for, as is often the case in Indian philosophy, the treatise, very concise in its expression or even highly elliptical, is written for a knowledgeable audience, and requires familiarity with Nyāya epistemology and style of debate as well as with the opponents’ viewpoints.

Phillips has done an admirable job in making the incredibly complex and abstruse philosophical discourse and style of Gaṅgeśa (and of Navya-Nyāya for that matter) accessible to the English-reading public. Dense, detailed, and demanding, this solid and welcome volume continues the translations of the Navya-Nyāya philosophy in English started in the 1950s by Ingalls, and it is to be hoped that Phillips and Tatacharya will continue to take up the challenge of improving the understanding of Gaṅgeśa’s epistemology and of addressing both professional Indologists and comparative philosophers alike.

Université de Lausanne  
Section de Langues et Civilisations Orientales  
Faculté des Lettres / BFSH 2 (Humense)  
1015 Lausanne-Dorigny  
Switzerland  
Bogdan.Diaconescu@unil.ch

BOGDAN DIACONESCU

JOHN R. HINNELLS, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora. Religion and Migration. The Ratanbai Katrak Lectures, the Oriental Faculty, Oxford 1985*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005 (xvii + 865) ISBN 0-19-826759-2 (hb.) £ 130.00.

To a wider audience, professor (emeritus) Hinnells is mainly known as the editor (mostly for Blackwell and Penguin) of such popular reference works as *The Penguin dictionary of religions*, *A new dictionary of religions*, *A handbook of living religions*, *A new handbook of living religions*, *Who's who of world religions*, *The Blackwell dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, and, most recently, *The Routledge companion to the study of religion*. His own original research work focuses mostly on four fields that can be grouped into two main areas: (1) Mithraism (among other contributions, he edited two substantial volumes, in 1975 and 1994 respectively) and Zoroastrian influences on Judaism and early Christianity; (2) Parsis in modern India (especially in Bombay) and in the diaspora.<sup>1</sup> The latter area is the object of the two scholarly monographs he has hitherto published: *Zoroastrians in Britain* (1996, reviewed in *Numen* 46/2 [1999] 225–233) and the book under review, a prohibitively priced, massive volume which is the result of three decades of research (completed only after retirement) undertaken in some fifteen countries in different parts of the world.

Part of the data that the book was meant to build on — a massive global survey of several important Zoroastrian diaspora communities around the globe undertaken in the mid-1980s (based on a questionnaire, reproduced as appendix 3 in the book, with over 170 variables and 1,840 responses) — is by now already part of the history recounted in the book. Occasionally, Hinnells reflects on such changes, for instance in his discussion of matters of citizenship and identity (690).

The background to this study is Hinnells' work on the Parsis in India. Much of the religious and social infrastructure built up by the Indian Parsis since the 19th century was funded by money earned abroad and remitted to India (see p. 700). Hinnells followed the history of the Parsis'

---

<sup>1</sup> A selection of some of his most important contributions has been published in an Ashgate reprint series: J. R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies. Selected Works*, Aldershot, Burlington, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate 2000.

migrations around the globe. When he started his work on diaspora communities, very few Iranian Zoroastrians had migrated to other countries. This was to dramatically change following the Iranian revolution in 1978/79, the subsequent war and the ensuing economic and cultural depression. Both the Indian and the Iranian Zoroastrian communities are nowadays highly affected by migration, but Hinnells is mainly concerned with the Parsis (and that is the reason why he occasionally speaks of “the old country” [1] in the singular, as if there were not at least two ‘old countries’). This is most in evidence in that the second chapter of the book — the first introduces some general issues including a reflection on key-terms — extensively documents the fate of the “Parsis in Post-Independence Bombay” (pp. 33–137). It is unclear whether Hinnells regards the Bombay community itself as diasporic — for Bombay is South to the traditional areas of Parsi settlement in Gujarat — or if the chapter is merely included as many developments in Bombay are points of reference for much of what is going on in the Parsi diaspora, since Bombay is by far the largest Zoroastrian settlement in the world, with a wealth of Zoroastrian institutions and the home of most of the prominent religious specialists and opinion-makers. However that may be, a similar chapter on Zoroastrians in Teheran should have been added.<sup>2</sup>

The third chapter (pp. 138–144) briefly presents the above-mentioned global questionnaire survey and some of its more general findings. In a subsequent chapter Hinnells explains that his “original intention had been to produce a substantial monograph just on the survey and to develop a sophisticated analysis of the data. I changed my mind and included it as just one section of a chapter because I became increasingly aware of my own limitations regarding statistical analysis” (656). In chapters four to nine Hinnells provides extensive accounts of the Zoroastrian diasporas in Hong Kong and the China Seas (pp. 145–188), Karachi (pp. 189–244), East Africa (pp. 245–313), Europe (pp. 314–424), North America (pp. 425–542), and Australia (pp. 543–602). Taking into account the amount of time and extent of travel that he has put into his work on the Zoro-

---

<sup>2</sup> On the Zoroastrian communities in modern and contemporary Iran see M. Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras. Geschichte — Gegenwart — Rituale*. vol. 2, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2002, 152–262.

astrian diasporas, it is a bit surprising that Hinnells neither covers Sri Lanka, nor New Zealand, Aden or South Africa.<sup>3</sup>

As Hinnells points out, “[t]he modern Zoroastrian diaspora has taken place in two main phases: the mid-nineteenth century and the second half of the twentieth century” (699). While the first phase brought Parsis to Sind (later part of Pakistan), Hong Kong, the China Seas, and East Africa, since the 1960s Zoroastrians (now also increasingly Iranians) settled in North America, Australia, New Zealand and several European countries. Britain is the only country that has been on the receiving side both in the first and the second phase. There are some distinctive features to both phases of diaspora-formation (see pp. 699–713) which will be interesting to compare with developments in other religions. Moreover, Hinnells provides evidence for the observation that people who migrated between World War II and the 1980s have a different profile from the more recent migrants.

As can be guessed from the sheer length of the individual chapters, Hinnells provides very detailed and rich accounts that are based on an unusually vast array of source-materials. Apart from the survey, this includes participant observation and field trips, extended and repeated conversations with several informants, different sorts of archival materials (such as minutes of the meetings of different associations) as well as grey literature (such as bulletins of newsletters and other types of pamphlets). Hinnells describes both external and internal factors of the different communities, i.e. political, social, cultural, and economical circumstances and key-actors, problems, debates, conflicts, preferences, and activities of the people. In that way, Hinnells has reached an extremely high degree of reliability in his descriptions.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> These countries are briefly discussed in Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras*, vol. 2, 274–278 (Sri Lanka), 284–287 (Aden), 296–299 (South Africa), and 377–378 (New Zealand).

<sup>4</sup> One of the weakest sections of the book is the one covering continental Europe, for which Hinnells did not possess the same amount of source-materials as for most other parts of his book. For Zoroastrians in Germany see now M. Hutter, “Zoroastrismus in Deutschland.” in U. Tworuschka and M. Klöcker (eds.), *Handbuch der Religionen: Kirchen und andere Glaubensgemeinschaften in Deutschland. 10. Ergänzungslieferung 2005 (September)*, München: OLZO, 2005,

The survey of the above-mentioned countries is followed by a chapter in which he discusses some “Globalizing Trends” (pp. 603–698). The chapter begins with an extensive discussion of the formation of the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) and the ongoing discussion about an alternative world body (or a revision of the WZO). Moreover, he surveys Zoroastrian internet sites and tries to analyse the discussions in some Zoroastrian mailing-lists or newsgroups (as at 2002). Another section focuses on the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, the first of its kind to take place outside India and Iran (Houston 1999/2000, with some 2500 participants).<sup>5</sup> Last but not least, the chapter provides some general evaluation of the data of the above-mentioned global survey. The book is rounded off by a “Conclusion” (pp. 699–736).

One has to work hard to find even minor factual errors in the book. Hinnells is clearly aware of his own biases (spelled out on pp. 3–4) and tries to be balanced and remain neutral in matters of internal dispute,<sup>6</sup> avoiding to reveal too much about personality clashes and legal fights. On

---

VIII–21 (10 pp.). For Sweden (not covered by Hinnells) see Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras*, vol 2, 328–331.

<sup>5</sup> In the summer of 2005 the Eight World Zoroastrian Congress was held in London; the next one will meet in Dubai in 2010. The program of the London Congress included a book-launch for the volume under review, and Hinnells was quoted in one of the Zoroastrian magazines reporting on the congress. This is just one example of Hinnells’ presence within the community. Unfortunately, his book develops no reflexive stance to his involvement as an outsider scholar and at the same time friend and advisor. For some general remarks on “the generally positive relations” Zoroastrian communities “have with outside scholars who study their religion” as a “marked feature of the Zoroastrian community,” see p. 722.

<sup>6</sup> Hinnells has a fair number of informants from the mainstream camps (so-called orthodox, so-called liberals, and neo-traditionals), but his account of modern Zoroastrian esotericism (Ilm-e Khshnoom, for which see Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras*, vol. 2, 118–127) as well as his brief sketch of a neo-Zarathushtrian movement or group (for which see Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras*, vol. 2, 366–372) are unsatisfying. It is not true that Ilm-e Khshnoom “teaches . . . a life of ascetism and vegetarianism” (104) and he seems to overemphasize the Theosophist heritage in terms of direct dependence. On the other side, because of his lack of interest in the Iranian prehistory of the diaspora communities he overlooks the impact that Ali Akbar Jafarey had on Iranian Zoroastrians before the Revolution and his settlement in California. Comparing the

the other hand, his account goes into so much detail that one finds it hard to believe that anybody not primarily interested in Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism will be inclined to dive deeply into this massive volume.

While the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and other diasporas are certainly significant developments in the history of those religions, in view of the radical decline in numbers of the Indian Parsis and the uncertain prospects of the Islamic Republic Iran, a sustainable development of the Zoroastrian diasporas may be vitally important for the survival of Zoroastrianism as such (see p. 721). It therefore goes without saying that Hinnells' book is one of the main pillars on which the study of modern Zoroastrianism will rest for the decades to come. Probably no single scholar of Zoroastrianism will have the means, the determination, and the stamina to conduct a similar enterprise in the foreseeable future. If at all, Hinnells' research may be followed up by a team of scholars. Hopefully, the wealth of materials that Hinnells has gathered throughout the decades of his research will be properly archived and eventually made accessible to the scholarly community. With 736 pages of text devoted to diaspora-communities counting, probably, no more than some 25,000 people (strangely, Hinnells nowhere addresses issues of the global Zoroastrian demography!), the book is a unique testimony to the accomplishment of one of the pioneer students of religious diaspora, possessing an incomparably intimate knowledge of the people he studies.

Hinnells began his research long before the booming industry of diaspora studies we are now witnessing.<sup>7</sup> Zoroastrian diasporas share several similar patterns with other (South) Asian communities.<sup>8</sup> Hopefully, future diaspora studies will take up some of the issues raised by Hinnells in a comparative light. These include the importance of food (663), the interrelations between specific types of education and forms of belief (see

---

neo-Zarathushtrian to the Krishna Consciousness Movement (526) is problematic in my eyes.

<sup>7</sup> For a useful bibliography (October 2004) on the global Hindu diaspora (by M. Baumann) see <[http://www.unilu.ch/gf/3259\\_14461.htm](http://www.unilu.ch/gf/3259_14461.htm)> [29/11/2005]. A multitude of other bibliographical resources on diaspora studies can be found through a simple internet search.

<sup>8</sup> It would also be interesting to compare the results of his global diaspora studies with the modern developments of migrant communities in remote areas of India and Iran.

p. 670), including a notable difference between arts graduates and the science graduates in that the former “tended to practice the religion and preserve the traditional beliefs more than the scientists did” (673), and the differences in religious orientations between businesspeople and professionals (674). Of similar interest are the remarkable facts that “[m]ore of those who had undertaken postgraduate studies, those who had studied science, and those in the highest level of employment, considered that they had faced discrimination” (688), and that “[t]he majority of those who believed that they had faced discrimination nevertheless identified themselves as citizens of the place of residence rather than of the old country” (695), as well as his observations on the opportunities for religious self-affirmation provided by different sorts of inter-faith activities.<sup>9</sup>

Dept of the History of Religions  
University of Bergen  
Øisteinsgate 3  
5007 Bergen  
Norway  
Michael.Stausberg@krr.uib.no

MICHAEL STAUSBERG

Karl-Heinz Kohl, *Die Macht der Dinge. Geschichte und Theorie sakraler Objekte* — München: C. H. Beck 2003 (304 p.) ISBN 3-406-50967-3, € 29.90.

Insofar as one considers religions as having to do not just with transcendental realms, one must pay attention to bodies and actions, to movements and things. All too often, however, when scholars of religion have dealt with “things,” they have been concerned exclusively with explicitly religious objects such as paintings, statues or relics. We therefore must be grateful to Karl-Heinz Kohl for having written a book that while dealing with “the power of things” and while attempting to provide a “history and theory of sacral objects,” approaches these peculiar objects from a comparative perspective, indebted as much to ethnographic accounts, as to

---

<sup>9</sup> For important comments on an earlier draft of this review I wish to thank my colleague Knut A. Jacobsen.



philosophical, economic and psychoanalytic theory. The book begins with a history of the vicissitudes of “fetishism,” a concept once as popular among scholars as among the educated public, but now used mainly to refer to untoward sexual proclivities. Derived from the Portuguese *feitiço* (and ultimately from Latin *factitius*, “made by art,” “artificial”), the term “fetish” and its equivalents in European languages played a significant role not only in the early study of religion, but also in the encounters between Europeans and Africans. Important in this respect are the observations of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestants about the similarities between African and Papist ceremonies and, more significantly, about their belief that because of their “ridiculous rituals” Catholics would have a greater chance than Protestants to convert Africans to Christianity. In fact, referring to nineteenth-century travel accounts and to recent research (including William Pietz’ important work), Kohl explores whether the affinity between African fetishes and Christianity are not deeper; that is, whether fetishes are the result of Christian influence, perhaps having been adopted as part of the increased belief in witchcraft, reliance on amulets and the like, as reaction to the dislocations caused by European colonialism.

After discussing the phenomenon of iconoclasm and of its opposite, namely, the cult and production of relics — including the killing of the eremite Romuald (952–1027) in order to make sure that he would not move away, a departure that would have deprived his admirers of his beneficent presence and, later, of his relics — Kohl returns to the examination of the role of fetishism in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, dealing in turn with Brosses, Holbach, Kant, Hegel and Comte, before turning to Marx. In a key section of the book Kohl examines Marx’s use of the term, especially in the section “Der Fetischcharakter der Ware und sein Geheimnis” of *Das Kapital* (ch. 1, vol. 1, *MEW* 23, 85–98). As part of his discussion, Kohl criticizes Marx, claiming that the use of the concept of fetishism to understand “others” is but a projection of the alienation of his own society and that, therefore, Marx’s own text on fetishism is both explanation and symptom of what he seeks to explain (98). Does that claim — which reminds one of Karl Kraus’ *bon mot* about psychoanalysis — imply that Kohl’s position is not indebted to, or perhaps even determined by, current theories or, more generally, by the prevailing social conditions? As an example of this indebtedness we may point out that when he writes that

lack of attention to the role of desire is one of Marx's blind spots (112), Kohl reifies desire, not paying attention to the connections between desire and need. In doing this, is he not guilty of the same cultural bias of which he accuses Marx — in this case, the bias of the scholar of a society in which, for the majority of its members, basic material needs seem to have been taken care of? Along the same lines, the author's emphasis on the arbitrariness of sacral objects, buttressed with references to Simmel's and Lévi-Strauss' claims that one desires something because somebody else possesses it (128–129) as well as to Saussure's theory about the arbitrary character of the linguistic sign (155–56), neglects the connection between desire/need and scarcity, as well as the fact that at least some sacred objects relate to ordinary ones as desire does to need — that is, as their transfigured versions. This applies as much to the sacred weapons used in sacrifices, as to the agricultural tools used by Chinese emperors in their ritual tilling; to the eating utensils used to feed divinities, as much as to the clothing with which such divinities are covered. In fact, inasmuch as some eat and drink “sacral objects” — for instance, minute amounts of bread and occasionally wine in the case of Catholic communion — there is a continuity — in other words, a non-arbitrary connection — between those substances and what one eats and drinks to satisfy one's hunger and quench one's thirst. In this respect, physical need seems to have been ritually transfigured into a consumption that appears as having transcended need; and in this regard, too, theories that emphasize the uselessness and arbitrary character of sacral objects (157) do not pay attention to the connection between ritual activity, ritual objects and desire on the one hand, and ordinary activities, tools and need on the other; and in so doing, these theories do not do justice to the practical, material grounding of religion.

The following chapters are devoted to a discussion of prestigious goods and conspicuous consumption (without, surprisingly, referring to Veblen's *Theory of the leisure class*), the phenomenon of exchange and the genesis of sacral objects, based on Israelite, South Pacific, North American, Australian, African and Greek materials. The last chapter continues the exploration of sacral objects, this time focusing on collecting, from antiquity to the appearance of the modern museum in 1759. Kohl asks whether museum pieces are the sacral objects of modernity and then proceeds to a most insightful reversal of Walter Benjamin's dictum about the auratic

character of the work of art, by asking whether it is not its multiplication that endows the original work with an 'aura.' Given the fact that, as Kohl writes, Benjamin's short essay on "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" has attained the status of a holy text, "*so daß heute jede Kritik schon fast an Blasphemie grenzt*" (256), Kohl's reversal is most refreshing (and it could be added that just as a person who died an untimely death was believed in India to have become a fearsome *preta*, the oracular pronouncements of a theorist who died a tragic death will be regarded with unmitigated awe — as opposed, for example, to those of Horkheimer or Adorno, authors who, besides having become part of the establishment, died conventional deaths).

This is a book that because of its interdisciplinary character will be read with profit by scholars in a number of specialties; but it would have been richer if, in addition to Hebrew, Greek, Christian and ethnographic materials, the author had made some reference to cases from Asian cultures. The section on relics would have benefited from considering the role played by these objects in the Buddhist tradition, from the days of the Buddha, whose reported attitude towards his own remains is significant; to cases in which statues of the Buddha sent from one court to another were regarded as embodying powerful, if ambivalent, sacrality, as it happened between Korea and Japan in the sixth century; to those in which war among Southeast Asian polities resulted in the looting and transfer of sacred objects from one capital to another (cf. 153); to the present, when the Tooth of the Buddha plays a legitimizing function not just in Sri Lanka, but across Asia. Likewise, the discussion of statues would have been richer if it had included consideration of the rituals used to instill life into them, attested in South, Southeast and in East Asia (see Gérard Colas, "L'instauration de la puissance divine dans l'image du temple en Inde du sud," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 206 [1989] 129–150; Hubert Delahaye, "Les antécédents magiques des statues chinoises," *Revue d'esthétique* 5 [1983] 45–53), as well as the practice of punishing and coercing statues, similar to what Kohl describes on p. 55 (Alvin P. Cohen, "Coercing the Rain Deities in Ancient China," *History of Religions* 17 [1978] 244–265). Finally, it may be pointed out that the Greek *Xoana* (212–13) and, more generally, the interplay between iconic statues and half-iconic *Xoana* have their counterparts in the Indian *biiri*

as well as in the coexistence of iconic *mūrti* and quasi-iconic *bīri*. A minor correction: George Thomson, the great Hellenist, appears in the bibliography as George Thompson.

Department of Theology and Religious Studies  
Villanova University  
Villanova, PA 19085  
USA  
gustavo.benavides@villanova.edu

GUSTAVO BENAVIDES

Arie L. Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands* (Numen Book Series, Volume 105) — Leiden and Boston: Brill 2005 (XII + 311 p.) ISBN 90 04 14 33 84.

The rise of the scholarly study of religions has attracted attention over the past few years. The author of the present book, Professor of Church History at the University of Groningen, together with Dr. Peter Pels of the University of Amsterdam, already edited *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion*, Leiden and Boston 1998. The present book brings together nine essays on this subject on the Dutch scene; it “highlights processes of institutionalization, professionalization, and internationalization, together with discussions about methods and conceptualization in the emerging field” (p. XI).

The Introduction (Chapter 1) examines the question of “the intellectual roots of the scientific study of religion” in general (6), and answers by referring to a new concept of scientific knowledge, new discoveries of religious data, and a new perception of religion “as a more or less separate entity, which could and should be studied in a global perspective” (13). “From a methodological point of view, the rise of the science of religion can be described in terms of the encounter between the comparative approach and the historical-empirical methods of the cultural sciences of the nineteenth century” (13).

To write a history of the field the author recommends a “reflected” study of the past, that is attentive to the presuppositions, categories, and criteria used by earlier historiographies. Historians should also carry out biographical work on great scholars and open “a discussion of the emer-

gence of the discourse on religion in a broad academic context in terms of general socio-historical developments” (16). We should say farewell to the tendency to view the history of a particular discipline “teleologically” from the point of view of the present state of research. One should also be open to the fact that establishing disciplines and their boundaries has been and is a long-term process. Moreover: “Discipline formation is a matter not only of method and theory, but first and foremost of power and recognition” (22). Reading this historical account of some aspects of early Dutch science of religion is an edifying exercise. The Higher Education Act of 1876 reorganized the Faculties of Theology and it institutionalized the science of religion — together with philosophy of religion — as a discipline in these Faculties. Chairs were created but it turned out to be difficult to find Dutch occupants for them. The four Founding Fathers — C. P. Tiele, P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, W. B. Kristensen, G. van der Leeuw — apparently did not train potential successors working along their lines.

Molendijk gives a valuable treatment of the early Dutch contribution to the phenomenology of religion. It started with Chantepie de la Saussaye (30–31, 117–122) who is said to have taken the term “phenomenology” from Eduard von Hartmann (120). But he left the subject itself out of his *Lehrbuch* from the second edition on. Molendijk carefully describes its practice by Kristensen (31–36) and submits that it was Van der Leeuw who shaped it as a distinct discipline (36–47). One may add that the latter put a strongly personal stamp on it and that this discipline would be rejected by his successor in Groningen — the Dutch scene being sometimes a rough one. In Chapters 5 and 6, the author succeeds in pulling together various threads of the development of Tiele’s thinking over thirty years on religion(s) and religious development. Chapter 7, which has not been published earlier, describes the rise of ethnology (very much linked to research on the colonies) and other social sciences of religion in the country. As a kind of illustration of the way in which religious people could be looked at, Chapter 8 describes the “colonial” presentation of religions and their adherents provided at an international exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883.

As Molendijk’s book shows, the founders of the field in the Netherlands came from particular Protestant communities outside mainstream

Protestantism. They had not only strong minds but also personalities who could impose themselves. In a way they were largely self-made men who had studied theology. As scholars, they represented an intellectual elite with freedom of religious and other kinds of thought. Since institutional organization was minimal at the time, they enjoyed relative freedom and could also write about wider questions of religion and culture. They were not the products of institutions and they were and more than just individualists; I would call them “independents” of the mind. At least two of them — Kristensen and Van der Leeuw — were attracted by suprarational aspects of religious experience.

Since the new field was at a certain distance from Dutch Churches and society, I suppose that those working in it were felt as in some way “foreigners,” albeit it with scholarly authority. Their professional orientation must have given them a sort of “intercultural” position at the time and there are hints of this in their work. An important question is that of the connections between the rise of the new field of science of religion and developments in Dutch society, with its secularization and rising criticism of established religion. J. G. Platvoet has published articles on this topic which are complementary to the present book. In his Conclusion, the author suggests some explanations for the successful start of the new field in the Netherlands, such as the existence of Oriental studies, the interests of colonial policy and the needs of Christian missions. He also mentions the attraction of “religious Orientalism” as an alternative to the ecclesiastical forms of Christianity and also to the “modern” intellectual mood of the time. The new field interested a cultivated public looking for education, wider horizons, and emancipation.

I may add that the country suffered from religious conflicts; so there must have been hopes for “religious peace” on the basis of science and reason, guided by religious ideals. Especially liberal Protestants must have seen this solution as attractive; it is noteworthy that the science of religion in the Netherlands started among Protestants. Furthermore, different denominations, even quite different notions of religion, and different styles of thinking existed side by side there. From such a perspective, different religions found elsewhere could awaken interest. Moreover, the very absoluteness attributed to religion in the Netherlands could unleash the passion to study religions and religion as an empirical subject and give weight to studying the diversity of religions elsewhere.

Significantly, at the end of his book the author hints at an intricate connection between science of religion and theology in the country: “the fact that the science of religion in the Netherlands emerged out of theology gave it a flying start” (270). What kind of science of religion arose from what kind of theology? And what kind of philosophy of religion resulted from such a science of religion? It still is one of the secrets of the science of religion, and not only in the Netherlands.

This is an important book. Once given the valuable information Molendijk provides, we should dive deeper into the subject. There are more ways than the formal disciplinary one to describe the history of the study of religions. In the Dutch case I would plead for further research with at least four focuses.

1) The typically religious and “theological” contexts out of which scholars emerged and in which they worked — and also ideological, social and political contexts — should be better known. Non-Dutch readers, at least, need to have a concise sketch of the thought worlds among the *Remonstranten* (for Tiele) and the *Ethischen* (for Chantepie and Van der Leeuw), and especially the thought world of the Dutch Reformed Church and the various associations in which Van der Leeuw was active. The country has known a great diversity. If it is true that liberal politics gave this field an academic place, and that the University of Leiden played a pivotal role in its institutionalization, the study of religions there — historically speaking — has not only been a liberal affair. There were different intellectual and religious orientations — and ideological commitments — even among the four founders.

2) Molendijk rightly stresses the need for biographical work on “great scholars” beyond pure scholarship. When I worked on Van der Leeuw some thirty years ago, I was struck by the ways in which his own *geestelijk leven* (“life of the mind”) permeated his way of looking at religious behaviour and religions, and his project of a phenomenology of religion. Like Tiele and Chantepie, he was a Church minister and left printed, written, and oral evidence of that. From a scholarly point of view, deeper roots and intentions of work and projects should be taken into account which are relevant for understanding them. That should apply also when we study scholarly work and projects on religion(s).

3) Still more important to me, however, is the third point. The present book speaks of new views of religion, and a new discourse on religion at

the time when the science of religion emerged. That is true but there is more to be said. I miss here the idea of scholarly “discovery” and the notion of the “discovery” of new religious phenomena and religions, as realities that create amazement and curiosity.

As I see it, the history of scholarship is essentially the history of scholarly discoveries. They are adventures of the mind that can lead to detailed fact-finding, comparisons, hypotheses, and scholarly theories. The scholarly results of such discoveries are communicated to the scholarly community and can lead to discussion, debate, and, of course, further research. Scholars in the field of the study of religions, for example, discover that certain things constituted or constitute “religion” for certain people. They may go about to study the facts and ask what such a religion meant or means to the people concerned. This may lead to a more general interest in religious data, religions, and their contexts, and in the end, perhaps, to the construction of a model, a comprehensive theory, or a system.

This book does not deal with such a kind of history. It gives a more formal treatment of the history of the scholarly study of religions with its disciplines. The reader looks in vain for the content of the work of the four founding scholars: which new sources they exploited, which new data they found, which new connections they established between known data, and especially which original discoveries they made in their time. The history described here is indispensable but it is only a first stage. We need further stages, too.

4) Another focus of research to be recommended may seem to be disconcerting but it is relevant. What were the fruits of the science of religion in the Netherlands? Which debates and further studies resulted from scholarly findings about religions and religion? And where were there scholarly failures? Molendijk quotes Marcel Mauss, a prominent thinker and keen observer and scholar, who wrote during his visit as a young scholar to the Netherlands in 1897/8:

(En Hollande), on (ne) pense pas, on (n') invente pas. Nulle excitation philosophique. Ils (mettent) en un style clair de bonnes dissertations allemandes; ils adaptent lentement leur pays à l'utilitarisme anglais, au progressisme européen; le grand souci est d'être 'accurate,' et d'être fin, d'être clair et d'être complet. C'est tout. Nulle préoccupation de l'idée réellement neuve



et originale. Intellectuellement, le voyage n'est pas à faire. (p. 265, n. 25; compare p. 188, n. 38).

But there were better fruits, too.

Professeur honoraire  
Université de Lausanne  
Sciences des religions  
Humense  
1015 Dorigny  
Switzerland  
Jacobus.Waardenburg@unil.ch

JACQUES WAARDENBURG

## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

### *Periodicals*

BÜCHER UND ZEITSCHRIFTEN ITALIENS, 1–2 (2002)

R. Garra, Probleme des Verlagswesens und bei der Leseförderung  
U. Brancia, Die italienische Verlagsproduktion von Büchern in den letzten zehn Jahren  
Bücher  
Zeitschriften

### *Books*

Apóstoles, Francisca de los, *The Inquisition of Francisca: A Sixteenth-Century Visionary on Trial*, Edited and Translated by Gillian T. W. Ahlgren. Series: The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe — Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 2005, xxviii+195 p., ISBN 0–226–14224–8 (pbk.).

Batabyal, Rakesh, *Communalism in Bengal: From Famine to Noakhali, 1943–47*. Series: Sage Series in Modern Indian History, 6 — New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London, Sage Publications, 2005, 428 p., £ 39.99, ISBN 0–7619–3335–2 (cloth).

Cabezón, José Ignacio & Sheila Greeve Davaney (eds.), *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religion* — New York, London, Routledge, iv+236 p., ISBN 0–415–97066–0 (pbk.).

Finlan, Stephen, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors*. Series: Academia Biblica, 19 — Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2004, x+264 p., US\$ 39.95, ISBN 1–58983–152–7 (pbk.).

Harvey, L. P., *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614* — Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 2005, xii+448 p., US\$ 40.00 (£ 28.00), ISBN 0–226–31963–6 (cloth).

Hettema, T. L. & A. Van Der Kooij (eds.), *Religious Polemics in Context*. Papers Presented to the Second International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR) Held at Leiden, 27–28

- April 2000. Series: Studies in Theology and Religion (STAR), 11 — Assen, Royal Van Gorcum, 2005, xxvi+598 p., € 119.50, ISBN 90 232 4133 9 (hb.).
- Krishan, Shri, *Political Mobilization and Identity in Western India, 1934–47*. Series: Sage Series in Modern Indian History, 7 — New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London, Sage Publications, 2005, 279 p., ISBN 0-7619-3342-5 (pb.).
- Kroesen, Justin E. A., and Regnerus Steensma, *The Interior of the Medieval Village Church/Het Middeleeuwse Dorpskerkinterieur* — Louvain, Paris, Dudley (MA), Peeters, 2004, 430 p., € 90.00, ISBN 90-429-1540-4 (cloth).
- Markham, Ian, and Ibrahim Ozdemir (eds.), *Globalization, Ethics and Islam: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* — Aldershot (Hampshire), Ashgate, 2005, xix+218 p., £ 45.00, ISBN 0 7546 5015 4 (hb.).
- Petersen, Johanna Eleonora, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen, Written by Herself*, Edited and Translated by Barbara Becker-Cantarino. Series: The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe — Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 2005, xxix+140 p., US\$ 18.00 (\$ 13.00), ISBN 0-226-66299-3 (pbk.).
- Rüpke, Jörg, *Fasti sacerdotum: Die Mitglieder der Priesterschaften und das sakrale Funktionspersonal römischer, griechischer, orientalistischer und jüdisch-christlicher Kulte in der Stadt Rom von 300 v. Chr. bis 499 n. Chr.*, (Teil 1: Jörg Rüpke, *Jahres- und Kollegienlisten*, Teil 2: Jörg Rüpke/Anne Glocke, *Biographien*, Teil 3: Jörg Rüpke, *Quellenkunde und Organisationsgeschichte, Bibliographie, Register*). Series: Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge, 12, 1–3 — Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005, 1860 p. + 1 CD-ROM, ISBN 3-515-07456-2 (hb.).
- Sacco, Leonardo, *Kamikaze e Shahid: Line e guida per una comparazione storico-religiosa* — Roma, Bulzoni Editore, 2005, 288 p., € 20.00, ISBN 88-7870-032-0 (pbk.).
- Seckel, Dietrich, *Das Porträt in Ostasien. Zweiter Band, Teil II: Porträt-Gestaltung*. Series: Supplemente zu den Schriften der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Band 16 — Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2005, 407 p. + 133 figures, ISBN 3-8253-1586-X (cloth).

- Skoda, Uwe, *The Aghriā: A Peasant Caste on a Tribal Frontier*. Series: Studies in Orissan Society, Culture and History — Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 607 p., ISBN 81-7304-616-6 (hb.).
- Stausberg, Michael, *Zarathustra und seine Religion*. Series: Wissen in der Beck'schen Reihe, 2370 — München, C. H. Beck, 2005, 128 p., € 7.90, ISBN 3-406-50870-7 (pbk.).
- Zamagni, Gianmaria, *La teologia delle religioni di Hans Küng: Dalla salvezza dei non cristiani all'etica mondiale (1964-1990)*. Series: Scienze religiose. Nuova serie, 11 — Bologna, Edizioni Dehoniane, 2005, 129 p., € 10.00, ISBN 88-10-40390-8 (pbk.).

## CONTENTS

### Articles

- Henrik Pontoppidan THYSSEN, *Philosophical Christology in the New Testament* ..... 133
- Nathalie KOUAMÉ and Vincent GOOSSAERT, *Un vandalisme d'État en Extrême-Orient? Les destructions de lieux de culte dans l'histoire de la Chine et du Japon* ..... 177

### Book Reviews

- Max Charlesworth, Françoise Dussart, and Howard Morphy (eds.), *Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings* (Jeroen BOEKHOVEN) ..... 221
- Daniel Stökl ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (Petra VON GEMÜNDEN) ..... 223
- René Gothóni (ed.), *How to do Comparative Religion? Three Ways, Many Goals* (Religion and Reason 44) (Luther H. MARTIN) ..... 227
- Guy G. Stroumsa, *La fin du sacrifice. Les mutations religieuses de l'Antiquité tardive*, avec une préface de John Scheid (Francesca PRESCENDI) ..... 230
- Du corps humain, au carrefour de plusieurs savoirs en Inde: Mélanges offerts à Arion Roşu par ses collègues et ses amis à l'occasion de son 80e anniversaire / The Human Body, at the Crossroads of Multiple Indian Ways of Knowing: Papers Presented to Arion Roşu by his Colleagues and Friends on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, Eugen Ciurtin (ed.) (Peter SCHREINER) ..... 236
- Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz and Randi R. Warne (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Volume 1: Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches* (Religion and Reason 42); *Volume 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches* (Religion and Reason 43) (Michael STAUSBERG) ..... 238
- Publications Received* ..... 247

VOL. LIII      NO. 2      2006

VOL. LIII, NO. 2

ISSN 0029-5973 (paper version)  
ISSN 1568-5276 (online version)

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE

[www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

## NUMEN

International Review for the History of Religions

### *Aims & Scope*

The official journal of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) — is one of the world's leading journals devoted to the academic study of religions. It covers the full breadth of current international scholarship in the field, featuring articles on contemporary religious phenomena as well as on historical themes, theoretical contributions besides more empirically oriented studies. In all areas of religious studies *NUMEN* publishes articles, book reviews, review articles, and survey articles.

### *Editors*

Einar Thomassen, IKRR/Religion, University of Bergen, Øisteinsgate 3, NO-5007 Bergen, Norway; E-mail: Einar.Thomassen@krr.uib.no

Gustavo Benavides, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085, USA

E-mail: gustavo.benavides@villanova.edu

### *Book Review Editor*

Maya Burger, Département interfacultaire histoire et de sciences des religions, Anthropole, Université de Lausanne, Faculté de Théologie, BFSH2, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland; E-mail: maya.burger@unil.ch

### *Editorial Board*

R.I.J. Hackett (Knoxville, TN, USA); G. ter Haar (The Hague, The Netherlands); A. Tsukimoto (Tokyo, Japan); T. Jensen (Odense, Denmark); I.S. Gilhus (Bergen, Norway); G.L. Lease (Santa Cruz, CA, USA); P. Kumar (Durban, South Africa); A.H. Khan (Toronto, Canada); B. Boeking (London, UK); F. Diez de Velasco (Tenerife, Spain); M. Joy (Calgary, Canada); A.T. Wasim (Yogyakarta, Indonesia).

### *Honorary life members of the IAHR*

P. Antes (Hannover); M. Araki (Tsukuba); J.O. Awolalu (Ibadan); L. Bäckman (Stockholm); C. Colpe (Berlin); Kong Fan (Beijing); G.S. Gasparro (Messina); Y. González Torres (Mexico City); Å. Hultkrantz (Stockholm); G.C. Oosthuizen (Durban); M. Pye (Marburg); J.R. Ries (Louvain-la-Neuve); K. Rudolph (Marburg); N. Tamaru (Tokyo); J. Waardenburg (Lausanne); R.J.Z. Werblowsky (Jerusalem).

### *Notes for Contributors*

Please refer to the fourth page of the Volume prelims.

*NUMEN* ISSN 0029-5973 (print ISSN 1568-5276, online) is published 4 times a year by Brill Academic Publishers, Plantijnstraat 2, 2321 JC Leiden, The Netherlands, tel. +31 (0)71 5353500, fax +31 (0)71 5317532.

### *Abstracting & Indexing*

*NUMEN* is indexed in *Anthropological Index Online*, *Current Contents*, *MLA International Bibliography of Books and Articles on Modern Languages and Literatures*, *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, *Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works*, *Religions & Theological Abstracts*, *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, and the IAHR bibliographical journal *Science of Religion, Abstracts and Index of Recent Articles*.

### *Subscription rates*

The subscription price for the print edition plus online access of Volume 53 (2006, 4 issues) is EUR 213/USD 266 [for institutions and EUR 70/USD 88 for individuals]. For institutional customers, it is also possible to subscribe to online only access at EUR 192/USD 239. All prices are exclusive of VAT (not applicable outside the EU) but inclusive of shipping & handling. Please check our website at [www.brill.nl/nu](http://www.brill.nl/nu).

Subscriptions to this journal are accepted for complete volumes only and take effect with the first issue of the year.

### *Claims*

Claims for missing issues will be met, free of charge, if made within three months of dispatch for European customers and five months for customers outside Europe.

### *Online access*

For details on how to gain online access, please refer to the last page of this issue, or check [www.brill.nl/nu](http://www.brill.nl/nu).

### *Subscription orders, payments, claims and customer service*

Brill Academic Publishers, c/o Turpin Distribution, Stratton Business Park, Pegasus Drive, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8TQ, United Kingdom, tel. +44 (0)1767 604954, fax +44 (0)1767 601640, e-mail [brill@turpin-distribution.com](mailto:brill@turpin-distribution.com).

### *Back volumes*

Back volumes of the last two years are available from Brill Academic Publishers. Please contact our customer service as indicated above.

For back volumes or issues older than 2 years, please contact Periodicals Service Company (PSC), 11 Main Street, Germantown, NY 12526, USA. E-mail [psc@periodicals.com](mailto:psc@periodicals.com) or visit PSC's web site [www.periodicals.com](http://www.periodicals.com).

### © 2006 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill Academic Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publishers.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by the publisher provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

Printed in the Netherlands (on acid-free paper).

Visit our web site at [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

# PHILOSOPHICAL CHRISTOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN THYSSEN

## *Summary*

The idea of this article is to determine the sense of the Logos in the Prologue of John's gospel by making use of the subsequent Christian doctrinal tradition. As an introduction, the general influence of Hellenistic Judaism on early Christian speculative theology and exegesis is illustrated by examples from Philo and Justin. Justin's exegesis is evaluated in accordance with the principle of Wilhelm Bousset, that learned scriptural demonstration (*Schriftgelehrsamkeit*) is not the source of doctrine but a post-rationalisation of existing doctrines. Then, Justin's argument from Scripture for Logos-Christology (*Dial.* 61–62), which is based on Genesis 1:26 and Wisdom 8:22–30, is taken as the point of departure. This argument informs us about the philosophical ideas behind Justin's Logos-Christology, which according to Bousset's principle preceded it. Further, it is argued that Justin's scriptural argument shows that the traditional derivation of the Logos of the Prologue from the word of creation of Genesis 1 did not exist at that early stage, since if it did, that derivation ought to have appeared in Justin. Since no other derivation of a Logos in the cosmological sense from the Bible is possible, the presence of this idea in John can only be explained as the result of influence from the eclectic philosophy of Jewish Hellenism (Philo). This conclusion is confirmed by the demonstration that the idea of universal innate knowledge, familiar from Justin's doctrine of the Logos, also appears in the Prologue of John. The argument for this is that it cannot be fortuitous that the traditional translation of John 1:9 lends itself to this interpretation. As the idea of universal innate knowledge is an idea unique to Greek philosophy, this observation settles the matter definitively. The origin of the traditional interpretation of the Logos goes back to Tertullian's interest in producing an exegesis that complies with the Latin translation of John 1.

## *Approaching Christology Through the Christian Apologists*

Strangely, the Christian apologists have seldom been employed as a key to New Testament Christology. This is due to ecclesiastical

tradition. The Nicene Creed, and the theological tradition that built on it, became the official solution to the question of Christology for centuries, and this has considerably affected scholars of the history of Christian doctrine. Whoever is accustomed, however, to think of Christology in terms of the Nicene Creed and then undertakes a study of the Christology of the apologists, will find that they say many very shocking things. They *distinguish* clearly between the divine persons as separate entities and are little concerned about divine unity. They even talk of two gods.<sup>1</sup> They explicitly *subordinate* the Son to the Father,<sup>2</sup> and they teach that the Logos, the Son, came into existence as a separate entity *in time* in connection with the creation of the world.<sup>3</sup> Because of these features, the Christology of the apologists has often been labelled as “arianism.”<sup>4</sup> They have been looked upon as a regrettable aberration from the true doctrine, which Athanasius is supposed to have discovered. Consequently, theological exegesis has since then endeavoured to find the Christology of the Nicene Creed in the New Testament, and ignored the Christology of the apologists as a parenthesis in history.

According to a normal historical approach, however, you ought as a matter of course to treat statements that are nearer in time as

---

<sup>1</sup> *Dial.* 56.11, quoted in the text below.

<sup>2</sup> The Christians, says Justin in 2 *Apol.* 13.4, worship Logos “after God” (τὸν . . . λόγον μετὰ τὸν θεὸν προσκυνούμεν); they have the Son “in the second place” (ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ ἔχοντες, 1 *Apol.* 13.3). Provoked by a Gnostic text, cited by Celsus, according to which “the Son is stronger than the Father,” Origen expressly declares that the Son is subordinated to the Father: φάμεν τὸν υἱὸν οὐκ ἰσχυρότερον τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ’ ὑποδεέστερον. For this he invokes John 14:28 (*C. Cels.* VIII 15).

<sup>3</sup> Justin, 2 *Apol.* 6.3; Tatian, *Oratio* 5; Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 5 and 7.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Loofs characterized with contempt the subordinated Logos of the apologists as “der depotenzierte Gott,” that is, a God that “lacks” the “full” divine status as God that belongs to him according to the Nicene Creed (Loofs 1959:97). Even so liberal a theologian as Adolf von Harnack declared without reservation that the Christological formula of Athanasius (ὁμοούσιος) was “correct” (Harnack 1931, vol. 2:51).



the more significant keys for the elucidation of the subject you are trying to understand. The Christology of the apologists represents *a real tradition* that is close in time to the Christology of the New Testament. If used with due caution, we should expect to be able to draw important inferences from it for the Christology of the later parts of the New Testament. This is my approach to the subject, which may be described a kind of back door. Thus, as a working hypothesis we may expect that the Logos-Christology of the New Testament represents the first germ of what later turns up in the Christology of the apologists. This will in fact prove to be the case. But first I will say something about method.

### *Bousset's Principle*

As is well-known, Jesus of Nazareth was at an early date the object of religious worship as a divine being of a not very clearly defined nature. In his famous book *Kyrios Christos*, Wilhelm Bousset termed this phenomenon “the reduplication of the Christian notion of the godhead”: the Christians worship *both* God *and* Christ.<sup>5</sup> Bousset tried to trace the causes for the development of this “reduplication” from a religious-historical point of view. With those causes I am not concerned here. I simply accept it as a fact that this reduplication in the Christian worship and doctrine existed at a very early date.

The early Christian theologians endeavour to give scriptural proofs for this “reduplication of the godhead.” The principal ancient sources in this matter are *The Epistle to the Hebrews* in the New Testament, Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* and Irenaeus’ *Epideixis*. Without doubt, many of the Biblical proofs offered in this literature originated from discussions with Jews about Christ. These proofs may have been cogent enough to make trouble for the Jews. However,

---

<sup>5</sup> “Die merkwürdige Verdoppelung des Objektes der gottesdienstlichen Verehrung” (Bousset 1965:100); “das quälende Rätsel des δεύτερος θεός” (1965:259).

they cannot, as Bousset observed, have been *the real causes* for the reduplication of the godhead. Bousset wrote: “Das Verhältniß ist vielmehr umzukehren: unmittelbar im Kult sich äuffernde Frömmigkeit ist das erste, dann kommt die Schriftgelehrsamkeit hinzu.”<sup>6</sup> I think the validity of this principle will be obvious to everybody in the case of the question of Christology that I am going to examine. However, for the present purpose I will state the principle in a slightly modified form: The doctrine comes first. The learned scriptural demonstration comes afterwards.<sup>7</sup>

This principle will prove surprisingly fruitful. In many cases of Christian theology, scriptural demonstration is in fact post-rationalization. Just think of the arguments of Paul for the abolition of the Mosaic Law. Those learned artificial arguments can never have been the true reasons why Christians chose to do away with the Mosaic Law. Their secondary nature is evident from their artificiality. We could also think of the Philo’s obsession with finding Greek philosophy in the Pentateuch.

Now, if we apply Bousset’s principle to the scriptural proofs for *the reduplication of the godhead*, it follows that we have to look for other explanations for the doctrine of the reduplication of the godhead in early Christianity than the reasons offered by the

---

<sup>6</sup> Said in the 1st edition of *Kyrios Christos* (1913:109) against the attempts to derive the Christological title κύριος from Ps 110:1. In the 2nd edition (1920) he wrote: “Nur darf man nicht annehmen, dass Justin und seine Zeit den θεός προσκυνητός aus dem Alten Testament herausgelesen haben. *Derartige wichtige Entwicklungen gehen nicht auf dem Wege schriftgelehrten Studiums vor sich.* Vielmehr hat man den bereits feststehenden Glauben an den ἕτερος θεός nach rückwärts in das A.T. hineingelesen” (1965:252).

<sup>7</sup> “Bousset’s principle” applies only to *explicit* biblical proofs. It is not denied, of course, that Biblical and other Jewish literature *generally speaking* was a real factor in the development of Christianity. In accordance with the Myth and Ritual School of his day Bousset thought that worship, “der Kult,” “die gottesdienstliche Verehrung,” was the most original element in religion, and looked at the “reduplication” from this point of view. But since I am studying a later development, it will be justified to discuss this reduplication simply in terms of religious doctrine.

proofs. The explanations of the origins of the doctrine could be the ones based on comparative religion proposed by Bousset, or they could be others. But with this we are not here concerned.

The principle also holds good as regards *the philosophical character* that this reduplication of the godhead was to assume in Christian theology: *Logos-Christology*. It is impossible to believe that the scriptural proofs for Logos-Christology in the apologists and in later ecclesiastical writers represent the real origins of the doctrine of the Father and his Logos. Here too we will have to look for another explanation.

A few examples will be sufficient to illustrate the nature of the scriptural proofs I am talking about. They are taken from Justin's *Dialogue*, which usually exhibits them in their oldest form. I will mention some proofs for the reduplication of the godhead as such.

Ps 110:1: "The Lord said to my Lord." Thus there are two Lords, δύο κύριοι, Justin infers, the one being God in heaven, who addresses the other, who is the Messiah or Christ. The latter inference follows from the messianic nature of the Psalm.<sup>8</sup>

Ps 45:8: "You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness." Here too there are two Gods: the God that the psalmist is addressing, which is the Messiah or Christ, and the God in heaven, who anoints the God Messiah.<sup>9</sup>

Gen 19:24: "Then *the Lord* rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire *from the Lord out of heaven*." This passage is much used as a proof text by the church fathers. Again we have two Lords, one in heaven that rains with brimstone, and another who appeared on earth to Abraham together with two angels (Gen 18:2). "Answer me," Justin argues, "if you will say that the Holy

---

<sup>8</sup> Justin invokes this passage in *Dial.* 56.14. It is often quoted in the New Testament, but not to the effect of proving the existence of two Lords.

<sup>9</sup> So Justin argues many times (*Dial.* 38, 56, 63). The same proof occurs in Hebrews 1:8–9. The translation is my own (ὁ θεός is vocative). The traditional translations miss the point.

Spirit calls another one ‘God’ and ‘Lord’ than the Father and his Messiah.”<sup>10</sup> This proof is of exactly the same nature as the other two. And it is obvious that neither of these texts was the real reason why Jesus was worshipped as a divine being, as κύριος and θεός. Or, as Bousset said: “Important developments of that kind do not come about by learned scriptural study.”

*The Connection Between Christian Doctrine and Hellenistic Judaism*

Now it is most important for our subject to observe that it can be shown that one of the standard proofs of the apologists originated from *Hellenistic Judaism*. Justin argues that the anthropomorphisms in the Old Testament where God comes down and appears in this world do not refer to God, the Creator. *This is a common idea in Philo*. The basis of this idea is the exalted nature of the godhead in combination with a sharp philosophical dualism between spirit and matter.<sup>11</sup> It is beyond doubt that this theology had its origin in certain areas of Greek philosophy, as appears at the very least from the occurrence of the famous phrase of Greek mystical pantheistic theology ἐν καὶ πᾶν in this context.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> *Dial.* 56.15. This passage, Gen 19:24, is the decisive argument of Justin, which he expounds at length *Dial.* 56.17–22. It is repeated *Dial.* 127 and 129.

<sup>11</sup> *Spec.* I 329: God created everything out of formless matter, but he did not touch it himself. For it was not right that the blessed nature should touch the limitless and chaotic matter (ἀπείρου καὶ πεφυρμένης ὕλης). Therefore God created by means of his “powers” (τοῖς ἀσωμάτοις δυνάμεσι), which are identified with the ideas. In *Leg. All.* III 69–73, Philo sets forth the doctrine that the body is bad by nature (πονηρὸν φύσει); it plots against the soul (ψυχῆς ἐπίβουλον); it is completely dead always (νεκρὸν καὶ τεθνηκὸς αἰεί). And he coins the striking expression that every human being does nothing but “carry around a dead body” (νεκροφορεῖν).

<sup>12</sup> The textual evidence of the use of this phrase in Greek theology was first collected by Norden 1913.

From the way Justin argues it is clear that the idea of the super-transcendent God came into Christianity from Jewish Hellenism.<sup>13</sup> That this is the case not only emerges from the nature of the argument itself, but also from many formulations of it in Justin that are identical with the formulations found in Philo. Justin argues: “The Creator and Father of the Universe does not leave the regions above heaven to appear in a tiny part of the earth. Nobody who has the least sense will dare to maintain that.”<sup>14</sup> This argument is clearly based on the metaphysical dualism of Philo. Especially one should note *the appeal to the common sense* of the reader, which betrays its philosophical nature.

### *Excursus 1: The Super-transcendent God in Philo and Justin*

Philo, *Leg. All.* I 44: Not even the whole world would be a place fit for God to make his abode. God is his *own place* (αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ τόπος), filling and containing all other things, but is Himself *contained by nothing else* (τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πληρῶν καὶ περιέχων, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ’ οὐδενὸς ἄλλου περιεχόμενος). For He is *One and the Whole* (ἅτε εἷς καὶ τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸς ὢν). Similarly *Conf.* 134–39; *Post.* 14–15.

Commenting on OT passages which say that God moves in space (the descent of God to look at the tower of Babel, etc.), Justin says, *Dial.* 127.1–2: “The ineffable Father and Lord of the Universe does not arrive to any place, nor does he walk about or sleep or stand up, but *he remains in his own place* wherever it is (ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ χώρᾳ ὅπου ποτὲ μένει); he does not move, *he who cannot be contained in any place or in the whole world* (οὔτε κινούμενος, ὁ τόπῳ τε ἀχώρητος καὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ὅλῳ).” In the same way Philo *Conf.* 134, commenting on the same kind of passages,

<sup>13</sup> Expressions for this God in Justin are “the supra-cosmic God” (ὁ ὑπὲρ τὸν κόσμον θεός) *Dial.* 60.5; “the God without name” (ὁ ἀνωνόματος θεός) *1 Apol.* 63.1; “the ineffable Father and Lord of the Universe” (ὁ ἄρρητος πατήρ καὶ κύριος τῶν πάντων) *Dial.* 127.1. In Philo we have similarly *Conf.* 63 “the Father of the Universe” (ὁ τῶν ὅλων πατήρ), cf. *Dial.* 60.2 below.

<sup>14</sup> *Dial.* 60.2: Οὐ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων καὶ πατέρα, καταλιπόντα τὰ ὑπὲρ οὐρανὸν ἅπαντα, ἐν ὀλίγῳ γῆς μορίῳ πεφάνθαι, πᾶς ὅστισιν, κἂν μικρὸν νοῦν ἔχων, τολμήσει εἰπεῖν.

says: “To suppose that the Deity approaches or departs, goes down or goes up . . . , is an impiety which may be said to transcend the bounds of ocean or of the universe itself (προσιέναι γὰρ ἢ ἀπιέναι ἢ κατιέναι ἢ τοῦ-ναντίον ἀνέρχεσθαι . . . τὸ θεῖον ὑπολαμβάνειν ὑπερωκέανος καὶ μετακόσμιος, ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, ἐστὶν ἀσέβεια).” Like Justin (*Dial.* 62.2 above), Philo emphasizes *the self-evident stupidity* of the belief in the motion of the godhead, that is: the doctrine is philosophical, not scriptural.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless Scripture says that God has appeared to humans in this world. On the basis of the arguments given above, Justin concludes like Philo that these statements cannot refer to the supra-cosmic God, who cannot appear on earth. But unlike Philo, who endeavours to explain away these statements by various expedients,<sup>16</sup> Justin declares that these statements in Scripture refer to *another divine being*: “The god that is said to appear is another than the god that has created the universe, according to number, I mean, not according to will.”<sup>17</sup> He identifies this other divine being with the being which Scripture calls the “messenger,” ἄγγελος. And Justin quite correctly points out that Scripture also calls this being both “Lord” and “God,” κύριος and θεός. So again we have “two Lords” or “two Gods,” δύο κύριοι or δύο θεοί.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Quaest. Exod.* II 45 Gr.: It is impious and foolish to believe that there are spatial movements concerning the divine (τοπικὰς καὶ μεταβατικὰς κινήσεις περὶ τὸ θεῖον).

<sup>16</sup> Typical expedients of this kind are: (1) these statements in Scripture were made for *paedagogic reasons* to teach the uneducated something else (*Conf.* 140); (2) they refer to God’s “Glory” (δόξα) or “Power” (δύναμις), not to God himself; (3) they are *docetic*: they refer only to human imagination or fancy (δόκησις) (both explanations *Quaest. Exod.* II 45 Gr.). For the explanation that these statements refer to the Logos, see below.

<sup>17</sup> *Dial.* 56.11: οὗτος ὁ ὤφθαι λεγόμενος θεὸς ἕτερός ἐστι τοῦ τὰ πάντα ποιήσαντος θεοῦ, ἀριθμῷ λέγω, ἀλλὰ οὐ γνώμῃ. Similarly *Dial.* 129.1.

<sup>18</sup> Justin identifies *Dial.* 60.4–5 ἄγγελος Ex 3:2 with κύριος Ex 3:7 and with θεός Ex 3:13–15; ἄγγελος Gen 31:11 he identifies with θεός Gen 31:13 and with κύριος Gen 28:13. Thus there is a Lord and God, κύριος and θεός, who is another being than the supra-cosmic God. This god is called ἄγγελος, “messenger” (*I Apol.* 63.5, cf. 6.2), “because he communicates messages to men from the

As a result of his meticulous investigations Justin triumphantly concludes that the being with whom the patriarchs held conversation was no other than this second God, whom Justin declares to be the ineffable Father's son. For, as he says *Dial.* 127.4, "if we do not understand the Scriptures in this way, it follows that the Father and Lord of the Universe was not present in heaven when the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom."

Now it appears from a passage in his *First Apology* that Justin thinks that this other God on earth is *the Logos*.<sup>19</sup> This assumption he cannot demonstrate from Scripture, nor does he attempt to. *But the idea that the divine being that appears on earth according the Old Testament is the Logos, is an idea that also occurs in Hellenistic Judaism.* For in Philo the Logos sometimes appears in this position as an incarnate divine being in this world. And this idea Philo propounds in interpretations of passages of the same type as the ones Justin invokes, that is, the narratives of theophanies. In Philo's readings of the scriptures, this kind of interpretation is a way of getting rid of an embarrassment. God ought not to descend on earth. Philo also wavers between this interpretation and a purely docetic one. But since Philo already has the Logos in his philosophical system, this way of understanding the God on earth is indeed an obvious possibility.

---

Father, the Creator of all things" (ἐκ τοῦ διαγγέλλειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ποιητοῦ τῶν ὅλων, *Dial.* 60.3). Because of this, Justin *I Apol.* 63.4–5 calls him "the word of God" and "envoy": "The word of God is his son, as we stated earlier. He is also called messenger and envoi" (ὁ δὲ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ, ὡς προέφημεν. καὶ ἄγγελος δὲ καλεῖται καὶ ἀπόστολος).

<sup>19</sup> In *I Apol.* 63.10, Justin, after quoting Ex 3:14, explains that "the angel" that appeared in the burning bush was the Logos, the son of God, and not, as the Jews say, the supra-cosmic God: "Jesus the Messiah is God's son and envoi, he, who earlier was the Logos, sometimes appearing in the form of fire, sometimes in the image of non-corporeal entities" (υἱὸς θεοῦ καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός ἐστι, πρότερον λόγος ὢν, καὶ ἐν ἰδέᾳ πυρὸς ποτὲ φανείς, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ ἐν εἰκόνι ἀσωμάτων).

The Christian apologists offer no explanation why the second God Logos should be able to appear on earth, rather than the supra-cosmic God. But in Philo we can see both how this idea originated, and why he can accept it. Philo's interpretation of the theophanies *as appearances of the Logos* originated from the agreement in sense between the "messenger," the Hebrew *mal'ak*, ἄγγελος, and λόγος in the sense of the revealed word of God.<sup>20</sup> But from this meaning of λόγος Philo immediately drifted into using λόγος in the ordinary sense of a cosmological principle. From Philo's system we can also understand why he did not object to the idea that the Logos is the God on earth. For as a cosmological principle the Logos of Philo is also immanent, or, so to speak, incarnate in the material world.<sup>21</sup> This feature comes from the Stoic system, from which the Logos of Philo borrowed so many other features, including the designation Logos itself.

Thus from the philosophy of Philo or Hellenistic Judaism we get a complete explanation of two fundamental theological ideas in the apologists: (1) that the supreme God does not appear in this world, and (2) that the Logos was the revealer on earth about which the Old Testament narrates.<sup>22</sup> We understand both how the exegesis

---

<sup>20</sup> This origin of the idea is reflected in Justin in the passage *I Apol.* 63.4–5, quoted above.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Plant.* 8–10, where the Logos is ascribed the same properties as those with which the Stoic concept of ἔξις, "cohesion," is characterized in *Quod Deus* 35–36 (πνεῦμα ἀναστρέφον ἐφ' ἑαυτό, "a spirit returning to itself," etc.). The same is the case in *Fuga* 110–112, where the Logos is definitely said to be immanent in the world, just as the soul in the body, and likewise *Somm.* I 215. In *Agric.* 51, the Logos is the Great King's subordinate governor, who is the leader of the cosmos, just as the subordinate "Power" (δύναμις) of the transcendent God in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mundo* 6, which represents the Logos of Stoicism. More frequently, however, the Logos is replaced by "the Powers," αἱ δυνάμεις, in this function as the immanent Logos (*Migr.* 181; *Post.* 15; *Conf.* 136; *Spec.* I 329).

<sup>22</sup> Probably this exegesis is also the explanation of Paul's enigmatic remark 1 Cor 10:4 about "the pneumatic rock" in the OT which was Christ. In *Quod det.* 118, "the rock" is identified with Logos.



originated that was the justification of these ideas, and the underlying philosophical reasons of the ideas themselves. These ideas are not accounted for by the scriptural arguments in the apologists. Therefore they must have been taken over from Hellenistic Judaism, or rather from Alexandrian theosophy, *just as they were*. They are, in the German term, *Leitfossils*, which indicate that the Logos doctrine, at least in the apologists, came from Alexandria.

### *Excursus 2: The Logos Incarnate in Philo*

*Vita Mosis* I 66: In the burning bush (Ex 3:14) was “a form of the fairest beauty” (μορφή τις περικαλλεστάτη), “a statue very much like a god” (θεοειδέστατον ἄγαλμα), “refulgent with a light brighter than fire, which (form) you might suppose to be *an image of Him that Is*” (εἰκόνα τοῦ ὄντος). The last expression is a stock periphrasis for the Logos in Philo.<sup>23</sup> Philo goes on to say that this “form,” or “image,” is to be called “messenger,” ἄγγελος.

*Somn.* I 228–30: We should carefully inquire whether there are really *two gods*, τῶ ὄντι δύο θεοί, when it is said to Jacob in a dream Gen 31:13: “I am the God that appeared to thee in the place of God” (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὀφθεῖς σοι ἐν τόπῳ θεοῦ).<sup>24</sup> For the meaning must be “in the place of *another God*” (than the God who is speaking, for otherwise he would say “in my place,” ἐν τόπῳ ἐμῷ!), viz. the God who is named *without article* (θεός), whereas God himself, the supreme God, is named *with the article* (ὁ θεός). Philo goes on to explain that Scripture by this God *without article* means *the Logos*: “Here he (Moses) gives the title of ‘God’ to His (God’s) chief Logos” (καλεῖ δὲ θεὸν τὸν πρεσβύτατον αὐτοῦ νυνὶ λόγον). As appears from *Somn.* I 241 (below), the point of the interpretation is that Jacob in Bethel took the Second God, Logos, for being the First God, ὁ θεός. Philo here definitely talks about *two gods*, although he says that this is to be taken “in a metaphorical sense” (ἐν καταχρήσει λεγόμενοι).

<sup>23</sup> The enigmatic expression in Justin, *I Apol.* 63.10 (above), that the Logos appeared in the OT “in the image of non-corporeal entities” (ἐν εἰκόνι ἀσωμάτων), seems to be an echo of this way of talking about the Logos as “an image.”

<sup>24</sup> The Septuagint reads ἐν τόπῳ θεοῦ for “in Beth-El,” the reference of the passage being to the revelation to Jacob in Bethel Gen 28:10–19.

But this use (or rather abuse) of a piece of semantic learning is designed only to dissimulate his real opinion, not to be taken seriously. Philo really means that “the God” and “His Logos” are two distinct divine entities, as appears from the designation of the Logos as “the second God,” ὁ δεύτερος θεός in *Quaest. Gen.* II 62.

*Somn.* I 241: What is really meant by this becomes evident in Philo’s subsequent interpretation of the passage. When God says to Jacob Gen 31:13 “I am the God etc.,” the meaning is said to be: “I am the God, whose *Image* you did previously (in Bethel) behold deeming it to be Myself (οὐ τὴν εἰκόνα ὡς ἐμὲ πρότερον ἐθεάσω), and to whom you dedicated a pillar engraved with a most holy inscription” (this refers to Gen 28:18). Here again we have the stock periphrasis for Logos, εἰκόν. Philo gives a summary of this imaginary inscription, from which it appears that the “Image of God,” to which Jacob dedicated the inscription, is the creating and maintaining Logos of Stoicism.<sup>25</sup>

The point of this artificial import of the notion of the “Image of God” into the text of Gen 31:13 and 28:13 is the idea that the supreme God cannot appear in the sensible world. Therefore, the God that appeared to Jacob on the ladder in Bethel, has to be the God *without* article, “the subordinate governor Logos” (ὁ ὑπαρχος λόγος, *Somn.* I 241, *Agric.* 51, *Fuga* 111). On the other hand, the idea also implies that human beings, as beings of this sensible world, κόσμος αἰσθητός, *really can apprehend the Supreme God through the Logos*, precisely because the Logos as creator and governor of the sensible world can appear in it. This part of the doctrine is explained in the two following texts.

*Somn.* I 239: Just as those who are unable to see the sun see the gleam that “runs before the sun” and reflects the sun (τὴν ἀνθήλιον αὐγὴν), and

---

<sup>25</sup> *Somn.* I 241: “The inscription declared that I alone am standing, and that it was I alone that founded the nature of all things, changing confusion and disorder into beauty and order, and supporting the universe that it should be firmly established by my mighty subordinate governor Logos” (τὸ δὲ ἐπίγραμμα ἐμήνυσεν ὅτι μόνος ἔστηκα ἐγὼ καὶ τὴν τῶν πάντων φύσιν ἰδρυσάμην, τὴν ἀταξίαν καὶ ἀκοσμίαν εἰς κόσμον καὶ τάξιν ἀγαγὼν, καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐπερείσας, ἵνα στηριχθῇ βεβαίως τῷ κραταίῳ καὶ ὑπάρχῳ μου λόγῳ). As appears from *Agric.* 51, it is understood that the function of creating and maintaining the Universe is carried out by the Logos.

take that to be the sun itself, in the same way those who are not yet perfectly educated *see the Image of God, His announcing Logos, as God Himself* (τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ λόγον ὡς αὐτὸν κατανοοῦσιν). And so Hagar, the symbol of general education, ἡ ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, says to the *messenger* Gen 16:13: “You are *the God* that looked upon me” (τῷ ἀγγέλῳ φησί, σὺ ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιδὼν με).<sup>26</sup> But as the subsequent text shows, Philo thinks of the Logos, not as message from God, but as a cosmological principle.<sup>27</sup> So evidently, as appears from this passage, *Philo’s interpretation of the epiphanies in the OT as epiphanies of the Logos arose from the close correspondence between ἄγγελος, messenger, and λόγος in the meaning of the revealed word of God.*

*Somn.* I 231–32: God appears as he is to non-incarnate souls only, ἀσωμάτοις ψυχαῖς. When God appears to incarnate souls, ψυχαῖς ἐν σώματι, he gives himself the likeness of messengers (“angels”), ἀγγέλους εἰκαζόμενον; not that God is altering his nature, but he conveys a notion of another kind, δόξαν ἑτερόμορφον, to the effect that those who receive the impression think that his *Image* is, not a copy of him, but *the very archetypal idea itself*, αὐτὸ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐκεῖνο εἶδος. The last phrase is a standard description of the “content” of the Logos.<sup>28</sup> We can observe in this passage how Philo wavers between the idea of a real incarnation of the Logos in this world, and a docetic doctrine. However, there is no doubt that the “angels” of Scripture are identified with the Logos, the “Image” of God.

---

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 476C–D, where the unphilosophical mind is unable to distinguish between the idea and the physical phenomenon that resembles the idea.

<sup>27</sup> “She was not qualified to see the supreme Cause” (Οὐ γὰρ ἦν (“Αγαρ) ἱκανὴ τὸ πρεσβύτατον ἰδεῖν αἴτιον). Αἴτιον, “cause,” is a standard designation for divine principles of creation in Greek cosmological philosophy. And the text goes on with the description of the Logos as a cosmological principle in the “inscription” in *Somn.* I 241, which I quoted above.

<sup>28</sup> See for instance *Opif.* 24–25, 36. Philo is aware of the problem that the concept εἰκὼν has to be given a much richer content than that of a mere copy, μῆμημα, if it is to cover the idea of the Logos.

*The Scriptural Argument for Logos-Christology in Justin's Dialogue*

We have seen that the doctrine of the reduplication of the god-head in its philosophical form of Logos-Christology and the correspondent scriptural exegesis prove the influence of Hellenistic Judaism on early Christianity, that is, in speculative thought and exegesis. These ideas have not grown on original Christian soil.<sup>29</sup> They have been planted in Christianity by an educated intellectual, because they were *à la mode* in Alexandria. And this was done before the work of Justin, where the doctrine that the theophanies in the Old Testament were appearances of the Logos, is already firmly established.

Methodically, this once more illustrates Bousset's principle: Scriptural demonstration, *Schriftgelehrsamkeit*, comes afterwards. Or as the proverb says: "Somebody has an axe to grind." The first thing is the axe. Then they make the handle, the scriptural evidence, to fit the axe. But from the contents of the scriptural proofs it is possible to draw conclusions as to the nature of the idea for which the proof was attempted. For the handle has to fit the axe. As for the axe itself, another explanation must be found.

These principles I will now apply to the most famous scriptural proof for *the existence of a second divine principle* in the church fathers. It appears for the first time in Justin's *Dialogue*, 61–62.

Text: Gen 1:26: "And God said: Let us make a man in our image, after our likeness." From this Justin infers that there must have been another being present to whom God was speaking. Since God was *speaking*, and was using *the plural number*, he must of necessity have been speaking to *somebody*, and presumably to another *divine being*. Justin further points out that this being must have been endowed with reason, a *rational* being, λογικόν τινα.

---

<sup>29</sup> It is useless here to cavil about what "Christian soil" is. For the present purpose it is sufficient to point out that there is no Greek philosophy in Matthew, Mark or Luke.

Why? Because Scripture says so: “And the Lord God said: Behold, the man has become *like one of us*, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:22). So another divine rational being was present when God was creating the world, and this divine being was evidently active in creation (since it is asked to assist in the creation of man). Who can this other divine being have been? Of course this being was no other than Wisdom, Justin brilliantly infers. For Scripture expressly says that Wisdom was present when God was creating the world (Prov 8:22,27). And the Septuagint even says that this being, Wisdom, was creating “together with Him” (ἤμην παρ’ αὐτῷ ἀρμόζουσα, Prov 8:30).

Since this argument occurs in a Christian setting, it is understood that “the second God,” Wisdom, is Christ, and the underlying intention is of course to deduce the whole idea of Logos-Christology from the Bible, that is, *the idea that there is a second divine principle, Logos, by means of which God created the world, and that this second God was Christ*. This argument has been restated many times by the church fathers. It is the standard argument for the pre-existence of Christ and his so-called co-operation in the creation of the world.<sup>30</sup>

It is astonishing how often modern Biblical scholars have echoed this argument, as if deluded by the church fathers into believing that the Biblical concept of Wisdom was the real origin of the Logos doctrine in Christianity.<sup>31</sup> But the actual argument of Justin makes

---

<sup>30</sup> Later church fathers were able to improve on the argument by adding the observation that when Ps 33:9 says, “For he spoke and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast,” it must have been divine Wisdom the Creator was addressing, *for who else could have been capable of fulfilling a command of such magnitude!* Thus Origen, *C. Cels.* II 9, II 31. Eusebius arrives (*Praep. Ev.* VII 12.11) at the term λόγος by letting “the one God was speaking to in the moment of creation” in Ps 33:9 be “the Logos of the Lord” (τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου) in Ps 33:6 (in the philosophical sense!).

<sup>31</sup> As a legacy of this age-old tradition, every commentary on John will inform the reader that the Logos somehow derives from the Wisdom of Proverbs.

this implausible. This work of learned speculation and cunning reasoning could never have been the origin of Logos-Christology.

This becomes clear if we try to take the argument seriously. It then becomes obvious that the argument does not at all match the idea it professes to convey. The only thing it proves is that another divine being was present when God was creating the world. But none of the OT passages it invokes establish precisely the central idea of Logos-Christology, the idea that God created “*by means of*” his Logos, δι’ αὐτοῦ, in the sense of the fixed formulations of Logos-Christology.<sup>32</sup>

According to Scripture God created Wisdom *as the first of the created* (Prov 8:22). Or, Wisdom *was present* when God created the world (Prov 8:27). But it is also said that *Wisdom itself created the world* (Prov 8:30 LXX). Or, finally, according to the argument of Justin, Wisdom was *asked to assist* in the creation of *man* (Gen 1:26). But none of the Biblical proof texts invoked tell us precisely that God created the universe *by means of* Wisdom.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, the proof does nothing to establish a connection between the ordinary Jewish messianic ideas and Wisdom Christology: neither does it attempt to identify the Messiah with Wisdom, nor does it attempt to show that the human being of Christ was iden-

---

<sup>32</sup> By this phrase the idea is expressed wherever it occurs in the NT (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:2; John 1:3,10), except in Col 1:16a ἐν αὐτῷ. Justin uses it in 2 *Apol.* 6.3 δι’ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα ἔκτισε καὶ ἐκόσμησε. The instrumental dative occurs in the *Epistle to Diognetus* 7.3.

<sup>33</sup> This deficiency is disguised by the blunt conventional phrase that Wisdom was “co-operative in creation” (or, in the German term, *Schöpfungsmittlerschaft*), which corresponds to nothing in Scripture. To cover up this deficiency Biblical theologians later found the passage Prov 3:19 “God founded the earth by wisdom” (ὁ θεὸς τῇ σοφίᾳ ἐθεμελίωσε τὴν γῆν). The use of this passage, which is of course completely innocent of metaphysics, with the aim of showing the Biblical origin of the idea of *Schöpfungsmittlerschaft*, continues the habit, inherited by Biblical exegesis from the church fathers, of piecing together Biblical passages. The passage is not part of Justin’s original proof.

tical with the second God, Wisdom. Without these two features the proof is clearly deficient and unconvincing.

But the most important consideration is that the clear and characteristic idea of *a means of creation* could never have arisen from piecing together various texts from the OT. This becomes obvious if we for a moment reflect on the idea itself, rather than on the Biblical texts that might be its origin. People may debate whether the world was created by God, or not. But they will not naturally debate whether an omnipotent creator would be in need of such a thing as “an instrument of creation.” Such an idea would certainly not occur to any normal person at all. So for this singular idea we will have to find a very special explanation.

In fact, the proof accomplishes nothing but procuring a Biblical make-believe for an idea which was already there — convincing only to Christians, who were willing to accept that the proof only hinted at the idea. Only a person who already held the idea of Logos-Christology and knew what to look for in the Bible, could ever have figured out this proof.

### *Excursus 3: Wisdom-Christology*

Exegetical literature has been much preoccupied with the theory that there was a Wisdom-Christology already in the New Testament (since Hans Windisch and C.F. Burney).<sup>34</sup> But if the Biblical concept of Wisdom really had been the origin of Logos-Christology, there would have been no need for Justin’s artificial proof. We should also expect that the pre-existent Christ first and foremost was called by *the Biblical name of Wisdom*. Scholars have been turning every stone to find a trace of this in the New Testament, without finding anything that could not easily be explained in many other ways. The ingenious attempts at finding Wisdom-Christology in the Synoptic gospels are shortly outlined by James D.G. Dunn, who believes that Matthew had a Wisdom-Christology.<sup>35</sup> However,

---

<sup>34</sup> Windisch 1914; Burney 1926. A modern and much more elaborate version of the thesis was made by Schimanowski 1985.

<sup>35</sup> Dunn 1980:196–206.

the pre-existent Christ is named Wisdom only in the church fathers *after Justin*, and even then the primary designation is Logos, and Wisdom occurs only in the second place (for the sake of the Biblical derivation, obviously). And why should the Messiah, or even Jesus himself, be identified with the Biblical figure of Wisdom, or be ascribed properties of this Wisdom at all? A lot of speculation has been wasted on this subject, but no precise and logical connection has been found.

It is, however, possible that the post-rationalisation based on Wisdom was active already in the New Testament, and that this is what has produced some of the features that have been interpreted as evidence of Wisdom-Christology (Christ as the ἀρχή of creation in Col 1:18; Rev 3:14).

### *The Philosophical Nature of Justin's Wisdom*

Although Justin's exegesis of Genesis and Proverbs was not the real origin of Logos-Christology, it gives us most valuable information about *what kind of notion of Logos* Justin meant to establish by it. It is perfectly clear that Justin by this proof wanted to establish the idea of *the creating and maintaining Wisdom as a second divine principle after God*. Whatever sense Wisdom had in Proverbs can be left out of the discussion. What matters is that in the first century, Wisdom was in certain parts of Judaism seen as a counterpart of the Stoic concept of Logos. This clearly emerges from the well-known passage in the Wisdom of Solomon where Wisdom is ascribed many of the basic properties of the Stoic Logos.<sup>36</sup> Something similar is the case with the concept of Wisdom

---

<sup>36</sup> Wisd 7:21–8:1, where even literary forms of Stoicism are employed, the exhausting pedantic enumeration of attributes having close parallels in the Stoics (cf. the quotation from Cleanthes in Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* VI 72.2). Πεπλήρωκεν τὴν οἰκουμένην and τὸ συνέχον τὰ πάντα in Wisd 1:7 are expressions that define the Logos in Stoicism. This tradition of philosophic interpretation of Prov 8:22–30 probably also influenced the translation in the Septuagint, where the enigmatic ἀρμόζουσα, “joiner,” 8:30 (*compingens*, Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 6) is likely to be explained as an adaption to the well-known principle of philosophic cosmology: the *causa efficiens*.



in Philo. Wisdom in this period is simply a concept of Greek philosophy in Jewish clothes.<sup>37</sup> The Stoic influence on the Wisdom of Solomon was recognized as matter of course in earlier scholarship. A century ago the famous OT scholar Ernst Sellin wrote: “The traces of Greek philosophy in this Alexandrian book have been recognized long ago and are most certainly present.” And referring to the term ἀρμόζουσα, “joiner,” in Prov 8:30 he wrote: “Wisdom as the architect of creation. *That is most certainly Greek philosophy.*”<sup>38</sup>

Now, since the intention of Justin undoubtedly was to prove that Christ is this second God, Wisdom, this informs us about the sense and significance of the idea of Logos-Christology in this early time of Christianity. The aim of the Biblical proof of Justin was unquestionably to establish Christ as the favourite idea of idealistic philosophy: the active, creating and maintaining principle of the universe, which is of course endowed with *reason or wisdom*, or is reason itself, in short the *Logos* of Stoicism, the *animus mundi* of the Platonists, or a δύνάμις λογική, “a rational power,” as Justin himself says *Dial.* 61.1. This was the axe to grind. And this is also

---

<sup>37</sup> In Jewish Hellenistic philosophy Wisdom becomes a cause of creation as a second divine being after God. As the Wisdom of Solomon indicates, this structure probably simply arose as a result of the adoption of the Stoic notion of Logos (under the name of Wisdom, and later, in Philo, with its own name) into Judaism. In this way a metaphysical structure was arrived at which resembled “the God-in-levels,” “der gestufte Gott,” of Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism (see Dörrie 1976).

<sup>38</sup> “. . . weil bei dieser alexandrinischen Schrift Spuren griechischer Philosophie schon längst erkannt waren und auch vollständig sicher vorliegen”; “Die Weisheit als die Werkmeisterin bei der Schöpfung, *das ist gewiss griechische Philosophie*” (Sellin 1905:15, 17; my italics). Concerning the Greek influence on the Wisdom of Solomon there has been a strange silence in modern scholarship. Dunn passes it over with a single remark about a “language of Stoicism” signifying nothing (Dunn 1980:173). Larry Hurtado simply labels everything concerning Wisdom as “Biblical and Jewish tradition” (Hurtado 2003:366–67). Nearly the same silence can be observed in the classic work by W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (Davies 1970).

the doctrine of the Logos which we find in the other Christian apologists, set forth in plain abstract philosophic language.<sup>39</sup>

*Excursus 4: Other Ways of Finding the Pre-existent Christ in Scripture*

In addition to Justin's deduction of Logos-Christology from Scripture, which was to become the normal exegetical solution of the church fathers, three further ways of finding the pre-existent Christ in the Old Testament are attested in early Christian exegesis. It should be noted that two of them refer to Genesis 1, none of which explicitly support the idea of Logos-Christology.

The first of these consisted simply in inserting "the Son" into the text of Genesis 1:1 in this way: "In the beginning God created *a son*, then the sky and the earth" (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς υἱὸν, ἔπειτα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν). This text was evidently the work of a Christian who missed a reference to Christ in the creation story of Genesis and meant to restore it to the text in the belief that the Jews had removed it.<sup>40</sup>

Another way consisted in the interpretation of the words Ἐν ἀρχῇ, "In the beginning," Gen 1:1 as a direct reference to the pre-existent Christ. This interpretation is clearly attested for the first time in Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* II 10 about 170, and after him in Clement of Alexandria and Origen.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> It will exceed the scope of this article to deal with this theme in later Christian writers. It is sufficient to quote a sentence from Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 5, which as *exemplum instar omnium* will illustrate the general character of this theology: "God is *rational* (the Armenian word represents λογικός), and therefore He has created the world with *his Reason* (λόγος)." By this creative Logos Irenaeus means Christ.

<sup>40</sup> See Nautin 1973, who reconstructed the Greek text on the basis of Tertullian *Adv. Prax.* 5.1 *In principio fecit deus sibi filium*, and *Epideixis* 43, where Irenaeus gives a transcribed and corrupt Hebraic text which he says is to be translated in this way: *The Son was in the beginning. Then God created the sky and the earth.* Nautin guessed that the forger was the author of the *Controversio Jasoni et Papisci*, written about 140 by a Jewish convert to Christianity.

<sup>41</sup> Clem. Alex. *Strom.* VI 7.58.1, interpreting the Kerygma Petri; *Hypotyp.* 4.1–2; Origen in the fragments of his commentary to Genesis, transmitted by Calcidius, *In Timaeum*, 276.

This interpretation arose from the identification of ἀρχή in Gen 1:1 with ἀρχή in Prov 8:22 (as the text of Theophilus itself indicates), an identification which presupposes that the pre-existent Christ had been previously identified with the Wisdom of Prov 8:22–30. By this interpretation Gen 1:1 was made to mean “*By wisdom* God created the heavens and the earth.” This had the advantage of assigning to the pre-existent Christ the role of the instrument of creation. This exegesis originated in rabbinic Judaism.<sup>42</sup>

The third way consisted in interpreting Ps 45:2 “my heart threw forth a good word” (ἐξερεύσατο ἡ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν), about the proceeding of the Logos from God anterior to the creation of the world. This reference is attested in Theophilus *Ad Autol.* II 10 and is echoed by Tertullian *Adv. Prax.* 7. It was obviously prompted only by the occurrence of the word λόγος.

These interpretive stratagems all testify to the strong desire to extract the idea of the pre-existent Christ from Scripture. All of them are clearly post-rationalizations.

### *The Non-Biblical Origin of the Logos-Christology of the Prologue of John*

It has generally been the contention of modern exegesis that the Logos of the Prologue of John had its origin in the “word” by which God ordered the several works of creation according to the book of Genesis. This derivation is purely speculative. It is not testified anywhere in early Christian literature, and the Prologue itself gives no hint of it. But since this view has prevailed for such long time in New Testament exegesis, it is nevertheless worthwhile to discuss it. And this will be a way to realize what is really meant when the Prologue of John says that Christ is the Logos.

If we reflect a little on the matter, we will soon recognize that the modern hypothesis that the “word of creation” was the origin of Logos-Christology, is ruled out by the way in which the early church fathers found the pre-existent Christ in the OT. The high

---

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Burney 1926.

antiquity of Justin's, so to speak, official Biblical argument for the idea of Logos-Christology from the Wisdom of Proverbs and Genesis 1:26, makes it impossible to believe that there should have existed *yet another way* of deriving Logos-Christology from the first chapter of Genesis, and that this should have been *the real source* for the designation of Christ as Logos.

If derivation from "the word of creation" were the true source of the Johannine Logos, it would be impossible to explain how this true tradition should have disappeared, to be replaced only by a spurious post-rationalization. The same holds good for any other scriptural derivation one may imagine. It is impossible to believe that the true scriptural reason for a theological doctrine of such paramount importance could have completely disappeared in the few years between the Prologue of John and Justin's *Dialogue*. This becomes even more impossible when we take into consideration that this would have happened in a theological tradition so eager to produce scriptural arguments for everything, and so eager to reproduce everything thought to be traditional.

From this we are forced to conclude: The reason why we do not hear of any scriptural derivation from "the word of creation" is that such an argument did not exist. The scriptural argument of Justin occupies so to speak the place where that derivation ought to have appeared. Because *that* exists, the other cannot have been.

Or are we to imagine that John kept silent to everybody about the way in which *he* reached the conclusion that Christ was the Logos according to Scripture, and that this was rediscovered only by modern exegesis some one and a half millennium later? And that Justin, being at a loss how to justify the identification of the pre-existent Christ with the Logos, had to invent a new argument, a totally insufficient and spurious one? That of course would be absurd and question-begging.

Since, then, no Biblical derivation from "the word of Creation" existed, the Christian doctrine of the Logos cannot have originated as a deduction from "the word" of Genesis. In fact, no other Biblical derivation of the idea of a λόγος active in creation is avail-

able. Consequently, we are forced to assume that the presence of the Logos doctrine in Christianity is due to influence "from without." From where it was borrowed can no longer be doubtful after the attempt by Rudolf Bultmann to derive it from *Gnosticism* has long since failed.<sup>43</sup> Jesus is called Logos by means of a concept of *Jewish Hellenistic philosophy*, which has a concept with the same name and with same properties: a Logos that was the Creator's instrument of creation, and which is placed in relation to God as a subordinated divine entity. In fact this idea occurs nowhere else but in Jewish Hellenism. And being derived from Jewish Hellenistic philosophy, the sense of ὁ λόγος in the Christian Logos doctrine must have the same sense as in that philosophy, viz. *reason* or *the thought of God* or a similar idea.<sup>44</sup>

The argument of Justin is in itself an indication that this was the case. Justin did not invent an argument for Logos-Christology attributing to Logos a sense which the term did *not* have; he invented an argument which suited the accepted sense of Logos-Christology. As we observed above, the idea that Christ was the Logos in the philosophical sense of Jewish Hellenism must already have been established in tradition when Justin concocted his spurious scriptural deduction. And this was also the sense of the Logos for centuries of patristic doctrine afterwards. It is very unlikely that the sense of Logos should have changed *precisely* in the short time between the Prologue of John and the Christian doctrinal tradition previous to Justin. Moreover we never hear of anybody who objected

---

<sup>43</sup> Bultmann's strongest argument (1953:10–11) was his reference to Marcus the Gnostic, who in fact used λόγος as a Christological term in the sense of "word" according to Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I 14.1. From the context it appears that this is due to a popular re-interpretation.

<sup>44</sup> This last remark might seem superfluous, since it is generally believed that the *meaning* of a concept is determined by the demonstration of its derivation from a certain doctrinal setting. However, since this has been disputed by invoking the so called phenomenon of *pseudomorphosis*, it is necessary here to make a reservation as to that. In my discussion with Hurtado below I will show that the assumption of *pseudomorphosis* is unfounded in this case.

to the concept of Logos in Justin, maintaining that the original sense the Logos was “the word.” This is an indication that the sense of the term Logos in Justin must have been the sense the term had from the very beginning of the Christian Logos doctrine.<sup>45</sup>

Thus we are left with the assumption that the Logos doctrine in Christianity originated from a *free combination*, made by somebody who was “educated from without,” ἐξῶθεν παίδευθείς,<sup>46</sup> that is to say, from Greek philosophy as interpreted in Jewish Hellenism.

### *The Purpose of Logos-Christology*

Not until we think of it in this way are we able to really understand Logos-Christology. For only then do we become aware of the possibility of asking about *the purpose* of this doctrine. Only for ideas which humans freely devise does it make sense to ask for a purpose. If we adopt this perspective we are able to discover *positive evidence* that the Logos in the New Testament is in fact of philosophical *origin and meaning*.

Wilhelm Bousset set forth the hypothesis that the purpose of the Christian adoption of the Logos doctrine was to account for “the reduplication” in the notion of the godhead in such a way that monotheism was maintained and the danger of ditheism was averted.<sup>47</sup> This is just as simple as it is obvious. Likewise it is obvious that the

---

<sup>45</sup> Instead we hear of people who at the end of the 2nd century rejected the Johannine scriptures. Since Epiphanius named these people ἄλογοι, “the unreasonable ones,” with a pun on λόγος in the sense of *reason*, it is natural to infer that those people rejected the idea that Christ was the Logos, and not the Logos-Gospel only, as Harnack says (1931, 1:707). Harnack rightly pointed out that this reflects the unsecure status of the Johannine scriptures in the Christian canon.

<sup>46</sup> The phrase is adapted from Marcellus of Ancyra, who considered that the theological doctrine of Origen was due to ἐξῶθεν παίδευσις (Loofs 1959:192), that is, influence from Greek philosophy. As is well known, Christians and Pagans in antiquity were well aware of the phenomenon of borrowing; cf. the famous quotation from Porphyry in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI 19.4.

<sup>47</sup> Bousset 1965:317–18.

philosophy of Philo was very well suited for the purpose of reconciling unity with plurality in the godhead.

In addition to this it may be pointed out that Logos-Christology was also capable of serving *an apologetic purpose*. Nobody can fail to see this when we encounter Logos-Christology again in Justin's *First Apology*. No sooner has Justin introduced the concept of Logos than he applies it for an apologetic purpose. That purpose was to teach that the content of Christianity is *the true religious doctrine that has always been valid* and has always been *known by everybody*, because it is *innate in every human being*, or, in Tertullian's succinct formulation, it is the idea of *anima naturaliter Christiana*.<sup>48</sup> And the reason Justin gives for it is this: The teacher of the Christians, Jesus, is Reason itself, in which all human beings "participate." This is a classic apologetic motif. It gives the perfect answer to the classic objection to Christianity: Why did the revealer arrive so late?<sup>49</sup>

#### *Excursus 5: The Apologetic Aspect of the Logos Doctrine in Justin*

In the first three occurrences of the doctrine of Christ as the Logos in Justin's first Apology the idea is brought in to make an apologetic point. The point is that the teacher of the Christians teaches what is reasonable, and so in principle he is both known and accepted by all from the outset.

*I Apol.* 5.3–4: Socrates taught "with true reason," λόγῳ ἀληθεῖ, that the gods were wicked daemons. We, the Christians, teach the same thing, because we have been convinced by *Reason itself*, αὐτὸς ὁ Λόγος, which has "acquired form" (μορφωθέντος) and has become a human being (ἀνθρώπου γενομένου) as Jesus Christ.

*I Apol.* 12.6–8: All men refuse to receive poverty and disgrace from their parents. In the same way *Reason*, ὁ Λόγος, our leader, teaches that

<sup>48</sup> Tert. *Apol.* 17.6.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. the criticism of Celsus in Origen, *C.Cels.* IV 7–8, VI 78, and Justin, *I Apol.* 46.1 (below).

one should not receive “the old customs” (τὰ ἔθνη, the traditional religion) from them. And what *reason* advises one not to do (ὅσα ἂν ὑπαγορεύσῃ ὁ λόγος μὴ δεῖν αἰρεῖσθαι) a *reasonable* man, ὁ νουνεχής, will not chose.

1 *Apol.* 46.2: They make the objection against us that since Christianity has been taught in the world for only 150 years, human beings who were living before that time cannot be morally responsible. But we teach that Christ is *Logos in which all human beings participate*, οὗ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων μετέσχε. Because men in this way are created as *rational* beings or *endowed with reason*, λογικοί, they are morally responsible, ὑπεύθυνοι, to God (2 *Apol.* 14.1).<sup>50</sup> For participation in Logos means knowledge of ethical principles (2 *Apol.* 8.1), which are innate in every human being (2 *Apol.* 14.2). Whoever has been living according to these principles or according to *reason*, μετὰ λόγου, is a Christian (1 *Apol.* 46.3). Justin illustrates this by mentioning Socrates and Heraclitus (and Musonius 2 *Apol.* 8.1) and the friends of Daniel, as examples of reasonable pre-Christian Greeks and pre-Christian Jews respectively. The purpose is to say that salvation is possible *for men of the pre-Christian era also* because of the universal presence of the Logos.

This very same apologetic motif we also encounter in the Prologue of John, which I for the sake of clarity have to quote from King James' Version: *That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*<sup>51</sup> This is not the translation of John 1:9 we normally read in the New Testament today. But the agreement between the apologetic idea of Justin and this passage is so obvious that it ought long since to have been made the key of its interpretation, with the result of retaining the classic translation.<sup>52</sup> Even assuming that another construction of the sentence were possible, it is impossible to believe that an idea which occurs

---

<sup>50</sup> The reason Justin gives for this in 1 *Apol.* 28.3 is that human beings are “created with intellect” (λογικοὶ γὰρ καὶ θεωρητικοὶ γεγέννηται). This of course is the same as “participating in Logos.”

<sup>51</sup> Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

<sup>52</sup> The classic translation makes it clear that the enlightenment is an enlighten-



in contemporary thought, indeed a commonplace, and which suits the context, the notion of the Logos (if understood in the philosophical way), should happen to emerge by a *linguistic misunderstanding* or a *false interpretation*. Or to put it in another way: It is impossible to believe that the sentence should *by mere coincidence* lend itself to an interpretation that perfectly agrees with an important aspect of the Logos-concept of Greek philosophy: the idea of innate knowledge. But I do not think that a different construction of the sentence is even linguistically possible.<sup>53</sup>

The idea expressed by John 1:9 is, in the German term, a unique *Leitfossil*. A Logos which is said to be the source of a *general revelation* in humans can only be a Logos that has its origin in Greek philosophy. For the idea that truth is innate in all human beings is an idea which occurs only in Greek philosophy. This observation of course settles the matter definitely, and we can conclude: The Logos of the Prologue of John is the Logos of Greek philosophy. Consequently the translation of John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word" is to be rejected. It must read: "In the beginning was Reason."

### *Ὁ Λόγος in the Sense of "the Word"*

The idea that ὁ λόγος as a Christological term should mean "the word" (of God) in the ordinary sense is only attested late in the

---

ment that belongs to humans as such, irrespectively of outward instruction. It refers to an ability "which all have but few use," as Plotinus says (*Enn.* I 6.8).

<sup>53</sup> If the translation still not appears convincing, it can be justified in quite an independent way: By appealing to the translation into Slavonic language. Since the Slavonic version was made by Greeks (Methodios and Kyrillos) it must be right. The Greeks must have known the true construction of the sentence. The Slavonic version agrees with that of King James. For the benefit of readers of Slavonic languages I add the modern Russian version of John 1:9, which corresponds with the old Slavonic version: Был Свет истинный, Который просвещает всякого человека, приходящего в мир. The participle приходящего (ἐρχόμενον) goes with человека (ἄνθρωπον).

history of Christian doctrine, that is in Marcellus of Ancyra at the beginning of the 4th century. In order to maintain monarchianism, Marcellus took up the idea that the Logos was nothing but “the uttered word” of God, not only as the revealing word, but also as the creating word. The point of this was to deprive the Logos of the dignity of a second distinct divine being or *hypostasis*.<sup>54</sup> Probably this idea originated from popular theology. In his polemic against Marcellus, Eusebius characterized his doctrine in this way (*Eccl. Theol.* II 9): “He who taught godless things, declaring that the Logos of God proceeded as an active energy in the beginning of the creation in the same way as the pronunciation of an articulated uttering, God evidently in his opinion uttering sounds and talking like human beings.”<sup>55</sup> This idea was completely rejected by the established theological school, the Origenists. They argued that if the Logos of God was “a mere uttered word signifying something,”<sup>56</sup> it was no being at all, ἀνυπόστατος, “a non-substance,” that is *no-thing/nothing* in the most proper sense of the word.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Loofs 1959:191–93. The idea is attested in the *Cohortatio ad Gentiles* 15.2 (Marcovich 1990), where αὐδή (voice) is identified with ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος. Christoph Riedweg (1994) has shown that this book, which goes under the name of Justin Martyr, can now with great certainty be attributed to Marcellus of Ancyra!

<sup>55</sup> ὅς τὰ ἄθεα δογματίζων ἀπεφαίνετο λέγων.. προελθεῖν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς κοσμοποιίας δραστηρικῇ ἐνέργειᾳ.. κατὰ προφορὰν φωνῆς ἐνάνθρωπος, φθεγγομένου δηλαδὴ καὶ λαλοῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ ὁμοίως ἀνθρώποις.

<sup>56</sup> Eus. *Eccl. Theol.* II 13: ὁ διὰ γλώττης καὶ φωνῆς ἐνάνθρωπος σημαίνων τι.

<sup>57</sup> Thus Eusebius in *Eccl. Theol.* II 13. Similarly Epiphanius, *Haer.* LXXIII 30: “The Son is and is named Logos, not however as the voice of the Father, nor as an uttered word. For he is exists as an entity in himself and he is active, and by him are all things” (Λόγος ἐστὶ τε καὶ λέγεται υἱός, οὐ μὴν φωνὴ τοῦ πατρός, οὐδὲ ῥῆμα νοεῖται. ὑφέστηκε γὰρ καθ’ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐνεργεῖ, καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα); Cyril of Alexandria says in a speech to emperor Theodosius II: “There are some people who impiously have been driven into such a degree of madness, that they say that the Logos that proceeds from God is not a being in itself, but merely a word that is thought of as an uttering that is coming forth from a human being.

The modern exegetical tradition of translating ὁ λόγος probably originated as a misunderstanding of what Tertullian says in his *Against Praxeas* 7. Here Tertullian interprets God's utterance "Let there be light" in Gen 1:3 allegorically as referring to the proceeding of the Son from the Father as the first act of God in creating the world. This interpretation was then a novelty, but Tertullian nonetheless does not mean that the *sense* of ὁ λόγος is "the word." He explains very clearly in *Adv. Prax.* 5 that the sense of λόγος is *ratio*. He even says that the Latin translation of ὁ λόγος in John as *verbum* is due to simple-mindedness (*per simplicitatem interpretationis*). There is, however, no doubt that Tertullian's new Christological interpretation of the *word* of God in Genesis 1:3 arose out of his interest in complying with the Latin translation. This is obvious from his efforts to show, by means of introspective psychology, that the act of thinking, *ratio*, really is the same thing as "an inward act of talking," *sermo*. The purpose of these reflections is to show that it amounts to the same whether you call the Son of God "word" or "reason."<sup>58</sup>

Here and there in early Christian literature we find, side by side with λόγος in the philosophical sense, λόγος as Christological term in the sense of "the revealed word of God." This is the case in Justin, *1 Apol.* 63.4; and *Dial.* 60, 128. In these passages this sense of λόγος was probably prompted by the interpretation of the ἄγγελος, the "messenger" in the OT, as the pre-existent Christ. In other contexts this understanding is simply due to false popular reinterpretation (*Volksetymologie*), a phenomenon which has parallels in similar reinterpretations of other concepts of Greek philosophy,

---

Marcellus belong to these and Photeinos" (εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο μανίας δυσσεβῶς ἡγμένοι, ὥστε καὶ ἀνυπόστατον τὸν ἐκ θεοῦ φασιν εἶναι λόγον, ῥῆμα δὲ ἀπλῶς τὸ κατὰ μόνην νοούμενον προφορὰν ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ γενέσθαι. Μαρκέλλος δὲ οὗτοι καὶ Φωτεινός, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* I 1.1 p. 45.14 Schwarz, quoted from Riedweg 1994, 1:182).

<sup>58</sup> He opens these reflections in *Adv. Prax.* 5 with the remark: *Tamen et sic nihil interest*, "Even (understood) in that way (as the word) there is no difference."

especially among the Gnostics. Origen complained of simple-minded Christians who thought that the Son of God was a product of the Father that was “in syllables.”<sup>59</sup> Earlier this is attested by the well-known passage in Ignatius *Magn.* 8.2, where the Son of God is said to be “the word (of God) that came forth from silence,” αὐτοῦ λόγος ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών. It should be observed that in these cases λόγος is not absolute, but goes with the attribute τοῦ θεοῦ.

These phenomena, however, have no bearing on the understanding of the Logos in the Prologue of John because of the secondary nature of this interpretation of λόγος. This is evident from the fact that whereas the cosmological sense of the concept cannot come from λόγος in this sense, the reverse development is easily conceivable, either as popular reinterpretation or as a conscious application of the double sense of λόγος.

#### *Traditional and Modern Views*

Oscar Cullmann (1957) is a typical representative of the traditional modern explanation of the Logos. Although he accepts the idea that non-Biblical parallels can elucidate the Christian Logos doctrine (271), the Biblical and Christian motifs are the fundamental ones. According to them the Logos of the Prologue is basically *the revealed word* that Jesus announced *and was*. On the other hand, since it is also *the creating word*, it must also refer to “the word of creation” of Genesis 1, because he estimates that the explanation from the Jewish-Hellenistic philosophy is an unnecessary “detour” (*Umweg*, 268). The problem with this traditional explanation of how to identify these two “words” was not solved by Cullmann. Obviously his blurring of the distinction between the

---

<sup>59</sup> *In Joh.* I 24/151 (ed. Blanc, Sources Chrétienues): οἰόμενοι προφορὰν πατρικὴν οἶον ἐν συλλαβαῖς κειμένην εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, “believing that the Son of God is a pronounced uttering of the Father, as if it were lying in syllables.”

concepts of “speech” and “action” does not solve the problem.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, there is the problem that “the word of creation” does not occur as a noun and an entity in the Biblical narrative of the creation. To solve this problem Cullmann invoked those passages in the OT where the word of God is seemingly spoken of as a separate and active entity. To these passages theologians have referred since antiquity.

From these premises Cullmann arrives at the following conclusion: (1) When “the word of God” is thought of as a hypostasis, and (2) the word of God, by which the world was created, is identical with the word that was announced to humanity in the life of Jesus, then (3) an identification has been made between Jesus and the hypostasized, divine speech that sounded in the creation of the world.

Seen in the light of history, Cullmann’s explanation looks like a combination of the passages in the OT to which the church fathers (especially Eusebius and Tertullian) referred in order to give the Logos a Biblical basis, or in other words, a combination of (reinterpreted) ancient post-rationalizations.

James Dunn (1980) adopts a modalistic interpretation of Christology, refusing to accept a plurality of divine entities in Judaism. Thus, phenomena in Jewish writings, including the New Testament and Philo, that are normally understood as divine *hypostases*, word, wisdom, spirit, etc., even the Lord Jesus Christ, are interpreted as metaphorical expressions of God’s operation and revelation (174, 176, 210, 227). However, since this view does not affect his argument concerning the signification of the Logos, it may here be passed over. Dunn bases his explanation of the Logos on the identification of Christ with Wisdom and drops the traditional explanations of the Logos from the hypostasized “word” of the OT-passages. On the

---

<sup>60</sup> Another ingenious of attempt to identify these two “words” was made by G. Schrenk in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. IV pp. 134–138 s.v. *λέγω* (1942).

basis of the observation that Wisdom and Logos are synonymous in Philo, Dunn argues that the Logos of John's Prologue represents this Wisdom. Thus the Logos of the Prologue is formally explained as a reference to the Logos of Philo. But since Dunn assumes that the signification of the Logos in Philo is nevertheless "the word," he drifts by this device of translation imperceptibly from Wisdom to "the word" of Philo, and from "the word" of Philo to the Christian "word of preaching" about Jesus. Thus Dunn, after a detour into Philo, reverts to the traditional understanding. From Dunn's modalistic point of view, the idea of Christ as a distinct divine being could only arise by the "union" of the non-substantial Logos of Philo with a particular human person, that is, Jesus. This union was effected by John in his Prologue (250).

Although Larry W. Hurtado (2003) generally takes up conservative confessionalistic positions, he accepts that the Logos of the Prologue is to be explained as an allusion to the Logos of Philo. This, however, has no influence on his understanding of the concept, since he adopts the idea that the sense has been changed in the Christian context. For this change of sense he makes use of the idea of *pseudomorphosis*, the phenomenon that when concepts are borrowed from one set of ideas to another, the new setting will to a certain extent alter their sense.<sup>61</sup> By drawing heavily on this principle, Hurtado completely empties the Logos of its philosophical sense, claiming that term had been "creatively appropriated" in Jewish and Christian tradition to such a degree that its original sense is no longer relevant. For as a "healthy" new movement Christianity used the terms it inherited from other traditions for the purpose of expressing its own convictions.

Although it may be admitted that such extreme cases of pseudomorphosis are possible, it must be said that they are abnormal. The

---

<sup>61</sup> This concept was invented by Oswald Spengler in the 1920s. Hans Jonas found it very useful for determining the relations between Greek philosophy and Gnosticism. Hurtado makes use of the idea without mentioning the term.

normal state of affairs is that *when a term is borrowed, the idea that the term conveys is borrowed together with the term*. Otherwise there would be no point in borrowing it. Therefore, whoever wants to argue for pseudomorphosis has the burden of proof. Invoking pseudomorphosis without argument is question-begging. But none of the features of the Christian Logos that Hurtado adduces are sufficient as arguments in this case. Neither the fact that the Logos of Jewish tradition is subordinated under God, nor the fact that the Logos of Christianity is called God and has been incarnated, justify the contention that the sense of the Logos has changed into something entirely different from its meaning in Greek philosophy, let alone that the meaning of the term should be "the word." Philo termed the Logos "the second God," and Justin held that the Logos was incarnated, and still the Logos of Philo and the Logos of Justin are clearly recognizable as concepts of Greek philosophy. In the case of the Prologue, where the conditions are similar, the same applies. The Logos of John is a philosophical Logos that has been incarnated, and that's it. Greek philosophers from Plato to Porphyry would not have approved, but that is another story.

One wonders how Hurtado, when he comes to Justin, can say that Justin in his efforts to articulate Jesus' relationship (to God) for an audience of non-Christians, particularly focused on the term "Logos" as one of the *Biblical* epithets already applied to Jesus in Christian tradition (642). If the sense of Logos was "thoroughly adapted" in Christian tradition to such a degree that it had been changed into meaning something entirely different, how could this Logos be suitable to commend the Christian faith to the philosophically educated? Suddenly Hurtado now has to fill the Logos with a philosophical content, declaring that the term "also had a rich background in Greek philosophical traditions" on which Justin could draw. But how could it have such a content, if it was the Christian pseudomorphosis, the Biblical "word"? *Here there is something that simply will not fit*. From Hurtado's premises Justin's

apologetic use of the term can represent only a serious misunderstanding of Christianity, or a wilful manipulation of words.

*The Logos Doctrine in Other Parts of the New Testament*

As soon we have seen that the Logos of Christian doctrine is the Logos of Greek philosophy, we are able to discern the Logos doctrine in other passages of the New Testament as well. Thus there are those strange passages which are conventionally named “Christological hymns.”<sup>62</sup> Here some attributes of Christ of quite remarkable implications are introduced in passages of remarkably short compass: “the image of the invisible God,” “the firstborn of every creature,” “before all things,” etc. As a result of Biblically restricted exegesis these attributes have often been explained by various ideas extracted from the Old Testament. However, it can be shown that *all of them* correspond closely to what Philo says about the Logos, offering partly close parallels as regards content, partly exact verbal agreements. I can deal here only with few examples.

Πρωτότοκος, “first-born,” is synonymous with πρωτόγονος, which is a standard attribute of the Logos in Philo (e.g. *Agric.* 51; *Somn.* I 215).<sup>63</sup> Το πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως Col 1:15 corresponds the expression in *Migr.* 6 λόγος ὁ πρεσβύτερος τῶν γενεσιν εἰληφότων and *Quod det.* 118 τὸν πρεσβύτατον τῶν ὄντων λόγον θεῖον.<sup>64</sup> In other words: The Logos was the first entity created by God.

---

<sup>62</sup> I refer to the passages 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:15–20, Phil 2:5–11, Heb 1:3, making no assertion as to whether these passages really were hymns. The Prologue of John also belongs to these, but I do not think it was ever a hymn at all. Other passages of the NT are most certainly hymns, such as Eph 5:14 and 1 Tim 3:16, but these passages exhibit no traces of philosophical Christology.

<sup>63</sup> There is no difference in meaning between πρωτότοκος and πρωτόγονος. The preference of πρωτότοκος in Col 1:15 can be explained by the fact that it is an attribute of the Messiah in Ps 89:28 (cf. the quotation from Philo below). Its occurrence in the cosmological setting of Col 1:15 can be seen as an adaptation to traditional Biblical language.

<sup>64</sup> *Migr.* 6: The Logos, older than all things that came into existence; *Quod det.* 118: The divine Logos, oldest of all existing things.



What this implies is fully set forth in *Conf.* 63, where Philo is talking about the Logos: τοῦτον μὲν γὰρ πρεσβύτατον υἱὸν ὁ τῶν ὅλων ἀνέτειλε πατήρ, ὃν ἐτέρωθι πρωτόγονον ὠνόμασε, καὶ ὁ γεννηθεὶς μέντοι, μιμούμενος τὰς τοῦ πατρὸς ὁδοὺς, πρὸς παραδείγματα ἀρχέτυπα ἐκείνου βλέπων, ἐμόρφου τὰ εἶδη.<sup>65</sup> Here, the Logos comes into existence (“is born”) as “the instrument” of the creation of the world. This corresponds to the sequence of πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως and τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ . . . ἔκτισται in Col 1:15b.16–17. In *Conf.* 63 we can clearly see what the sense of the Logos as “the instrument of the creation” really is: The world is created according to (“by means of”) the eternal paradigms (the ideas of Plato) in the mind of the Creator, the words ἐμόρφου τὰ εἶδη meaning that the Logos “formed the *sensual* forms,” that is, created the world.<sup>66</sup> The idea that the creator, which is here the Logos, “was looking to the ideas of his Father” comes from Plato’s *Timaeus* (28A). In *Leg. All.* III 96 and *Somn.* I 75 the Logos itself is the paradigm.

*Leg. All.* III 96 and *Migr.* 6 say explicitly that God used Logos as an “instrument” (ὄργανον), with which he created the world. This idea of “a means of creation” arose from the notion that the Creator “used” the ideas as “seals” when he created the world, cf. *Spec.* I 329; I 46–48. The idea is often expressed in Philo with the formulation known from the New Testament, δι’ οὗ, e.g. *Spec.* I 81: λόγος δ’ ἐστὶν εἰκὼν θεοῦ δι’ οὗ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο.<sup>67</sup> The formulation is used regularly with the Logos, but it also occurs with Wisdom (*Quod det.* 54; *Fuga* 109) and with “the Powers” (*Conf.* 137, 172). In *Cher.* 125–27 it appears within the system

---

<sup>65</sup> *Conf.* 63: For this one the Father of all brought up as His eldest son, whom He elsewhere calls His first-born (Ps 89:28!), and when he was begotten he imitated the ways of his Father, and, looking to His archetypal patterns, he shaped the (sensual) forms.

<sup>66</sup> In Middle Platonic terminology εἶδος is the designation for the “sensual forms” of material things, whereas ἰδέα is the designation for the intelligible “incorporeal” forms.

<sup>67</sup> *Spec.* I 81: Logos is God’s image by which the whole world was created.

of “the metaphysics of prepositions” (ὕφ’ οὐ, ἐξ οὐ, δι’ οὐ, δι’ ὅ), which corresponds roughly to Aristotle’s doctrine of the four causes. The “instrument,” that is, the Logos (δι’ οὐ), here takes the place of the paradigmatic cause.

The idea that the Logos is the “image” of God (cf. εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου Col 1:15a) is so firmly connected with doctrine of the Logos that Philo can use εἰκὼν as a cipher for the Logos. *Conf.* 147 explains the cipher: . . . τῆς ἀειδοῦς εἰκόνοσ ἀυτοῦ, λόγου τοῦ ἱερωτάτου. θεοῦ γὰρ εἰκὼν λόγος ὁ πρεσβύτατος.<sup>68</sup> Other examples of this were given in Excursus 2: The Logos Incarnate in Philo. A Biblical post-rationalisation of the idea is given in *Opif.* 25.

From these agreements it is necessary to draw the conclusion that these Christological attributes were once transferred from the Logos doctrine of Jewish Hellenism to Christ. Why is this conclusion *necessary*? It is because by this hypothesis we *at one stroke* obtain *one* explanation for *all* these Christological attributes. Isolated instances of agreement may be accidental. But several agreements *that all refer to the same system* cannot be accidental. The conclusion that these attributes are of philosophical origin is confirmed by the fact that certain other attributes of Christ in the New Testament are indisputably of philosophical origin as well.<sup>69</sup>

The recognition that the Logos doctrine is present in the New Testament may also be used as a key to the understanding of phrases of more uncertain interpretation in the “Christological hymns,” where the doctrine may be latent. Thus we may suspect that the expression ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, “being in the form of God” (Phil 2:6), is a kind of *poetical paraphrase* of εἰκὼν θεοῦ ὄν, “being the *image* of God,” designed to produce the rhetorical effect

---

<sup>68</sup> *Conf.* 147: His invisible image, the most holy Logos. For His eldest Logos is the image of God.

<sup>69</sup> In Heb 1:3 Christ is a *χαρακτήρ* and an *ἀπαύγασμα* of the *ὑπόστασις* of God. It is likely that these concepts belong to a kind of Logos doctrine because of Heb 1:8–9, where the idea of Christ as creator appears.

of ξενισμός or *Verfremdung*,<sup>70</sup> or perhaps the intention was to conceal the philosophical origin of the idea. The effect of the awareness of this possibility on the understanding of John 1:18 is surprising. It is strange to observe here how the idea of the “two gods” of Philo or Justin seems to suggest itself in a veiled or poetical way to those who are acquainted with it: “Nobody has *ever seen God*. The only-begotten *God*, which is *in the bosom* of the *Father*, he has *declared him*” (my translation).

The passages which exhibit those terms also betray their alien origin. The Christological attributes that allude to the Logos doctrine pop up like a jack-in-the-box and then disappear again, almost without leaving a trace. They practically do not spread into other parts of the text of the New Testament.<sup>71</sup> This is particularly striking in John, where all traces of the Logos doctrine disappear after the Prologue. From this we should most naturally infer that in these cases we have to do with some kind of quotations in the text or, in the case of the Prologue, perhaps a subsequent addition.

Another odd thing about the “Christological hymns” is that we are offered practically no scriptural demonstration for their remarkable and far reaching Christological ideas. And when we do encounter an attempt of demonstration, it is unconvincing, just as the proofs of Justin.<sup>72</sup> Compared with the meticulous scriptural argumentation in Hebrews for the profound Christology of that letter, the absence of scriptural proof for the ideas of the Christological

---

<sup>70</sup> Fr.-W. Eltester (1958) considered this to be a matter of course, without considering that the Christology of the NT was under the influence of the Logos doctrine of Philo.

<sup>71</sup> The only exception I know of is 2 Cor 4:4, where the term εἰκών, in which the concept of the Logos is implicit, pops up unexpectedly. Col 3:10 most likely refers to Gen 1:27.

<sup>72</sup> Occasioned by the vocative κύριε in Ps 101:26 the author makes this passage, which deals with creation, refer to Christ (Heb 1:10). Only a person who already held that Christ was active in creation, could have selected this passage for scriptural proof. It is a clear case of post-rationalisation.

hymns is very strange. From this we should most naturally infer that the reason that no scriptural proofs are offered is that there were none.

### *A Hypothesis of Influence*

That the Christological attributes studied in this article originated from a philosophical Logos doctrine should no longer be regarded as doubtful. This fact leads to far-reaching conclusions about the spiritual situation of the earliest Christians. For it is absolutely necessary to explain how it came about that Christology as early as about 50 AD<sup>73</sup> could be imbued with Greek philosophy. However, I can only outline this explanation here.

In dealing with this problem we should first of all bear in mind that the doctrine of the Logos is a doctrine for intellectuals. Only intellectuals are able to grasp it and find pleasure in it. This is the case today, and it was of course even more so in antiquity. The popular reinterpretations of λόγος as “the word of God” both then and now are sufficient evidence of that. This means that we must assume from the outset that the Christology that applies the Logos doctrine of Philo has been created *consciously*. This actually makes the problem easier, because it limits the possibilities. If we combine an elementary knowledge of the earliest evidence of Hellenistic Christianity with the facts I have outlined here, a quite narrow bridge appears by which it was possible that Christ became the Logos.

We can take it for granted that some Hellenized Jews became Christians. This is something we know. We even know the name of one of them: Apollos. It is reasonable to suppose that some of these Hellenized Jews had knowledge of the Logos doctrine of Philo. This is particularly probable in the case of Apollos, “a native of Alexandria, an eloquent man, strong in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24). We also know that this man was attracted to the Pauline congre-

---

<sup>73</sup> This date is necessary because of 1 Cor 8:6 δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα, where the Logos-idea is implied.

gations in their earliest, enthusiastic stage. Here, the teacher of the community, Jesus, was worshipped as a divine being who had appeared on the earth.

These are the facts. Now for the hypothesis. Our Apollos, or whoever it was, realized that the adoration of Jesus as a divine being in the Christian community was in conflict with monotheism, just as the later adherents of monarchianism did. But he found a solution of the problem. For he knew that the Logos according to the philosophy of Philo was somehow a second God, a δεύτερος θεός, and that this idea, according to that same philosophy, was not in conflict with monotheism. He also knew from Philo that the Logos was the God that could appear in this world. And so he found that the problem of the adoration of Jesus as a god could be solved, at least intellectually, if Jesus was viewed as the incarnation of the second God of Philo, the Logos.<sup>74</sup> He may also have considered the beliefs held in the community as a some kind of popular representation of the philosophical doctrine of the Logos. After all this may not have been very different from the way Origen looked at the beliefs of the simple people of the Christian congregations of his day, or the way Plutarch looked at the myths of Isis and Osiris.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the beginning of the Christian dogma may be understood as a bold *interpretatio philosophica* of the ideas and practices of the oldest Hellenistic Christian communities.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> As evidence one may adduce the fact that Justin seemingly treats the OT narratives of theophanies as being on the same level as the incarnation of the Logos as the man Jesus (*Dial.* 127, 128; cf. *I Apol.* 63.10, quoted above).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *De Iside et Osiride* 371a.

<sup>76</sup> Cullmann rightly saw something like this when he wrote: "Während aber dieser (der Kyriostitel) seinen Ursprung, seinen 'Sitz im Leben', im urchristlichen Gottesdienst hat, ist die Bezeichnung Jesu als 'Logos' ohne Zweifel das Ergebnis *theologischer Reflexion*, die allerdings als solche jenes gottesdienstliche Kyrioserlebnis voraussetzt. *Darum sind hier nun außer- und vorchristliche Parallelen stärker in Rechnung zu stellen als bisher, insofern bewusster als bei andern Titeln an sie angeknüpft wird . . .*" (Cullmann 1957:265, my italics). Unfortunately he did not follow this track further.

And so, by a free, creative combination of ideas, Jesus became *the God Logos incarnate*. This our Apollos expressed in a veiled form in the so-called Christological hymns (or in their original versions, which may later have been revised), where he applied the Philonic attributes of the Logos to Christ, using as far as possible Biblical language (e.g. πρωτότοκος, κτίσις, ἀρχή). He, or one of his pupils, also wrote a little nice theological tract in Greek rhetorical style, in which he by means of the Logos doctrine justified the adoration of Jesus as a divine being. The author, or somebody else, found that it was suitable as introduction to the Gospel of John. Thus the primary purpose of this application of the Logos doctrine was to give a rational theological justification of “the reduplication of the godhead,” as Bousset suggested. But it is inconceivable that this person, whoever it was, who was capable of applying the Logos doctrine in such a creative way, should not also have been aware that a very potent apologetic argument could be drawn from it: *Jesus as the revealer of general truth, innate in man*. That idea is in fact also expressed in the Prologue of John, as we have seen. It may not have been the primary motif for applying the Logos doctrine to Christ, but rather a secondary outcome of it.

Some will find such a hypothesis fantastic. Here is my reply to them: If you sail thousands of miles into the ocean and come to an island which you find inhabited by human beings, it is necessary to infer that the ancestors of these human beings were once able to sail to that island, *no matter how inconceivable that may seem to you*. The presence of the philosophical doctrine of the Logos in the New Testament is a definite fact that demands for an explanation. This being the situation, even a fantastic hypothesis is better than none. The hypothesis which I have outlined here may not describe the real way this important combination of Christian and Greek ideas was made, but it describes at least a possible way. The opponents of any theory of influence “from the outside” concerning the New Testament will have to put up with the fact that the Holy Spirit has used a concept of Greek philosophy.

*Postscript.* By this hypothesis I have done nearly nothing else but applying to early apostolic times what Bousset said about the *apologists*.<sup>77</sup> Bousset said that the apologists adopted the doctrine of the Logos from their non-Christian environment, “just as it was,” *for the purpose* of justifying the fact that the Christians, in addition to the God in heaven, worshipped a human being who had appeared on earth, as a god. And in the face of this state of affairs they needed justification, *also to their own conscience!* For what they had preached to the pagans was just this, that polytheism was a pernicious delusion.<sup>78</sup> “The interest in the Logos doctrine depended in the first place on the evaluation of the person of Jesus (as a god).”<sup>79</sup> What Bousset meant by this was that the Logos doctrine procured a *rational notion* of “a second god,” that is, one

---

<sup>77</sup> Bousset 1965:317–18.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. the criticism of Celsus, *C. Cels.* VIII 12.14: “If these people worshipped no other god but one, perhaps they would have a valid argument against the others. But in fact they worship to an extravagant degree this one who appeared recently, and yet they do not think that they err in the question of God, if a servant of Him is worshipped too. But if you try to teach them that this one is not a son of Him, but that He is the Father of all, whom in truth one ought to worship alone, they are no longer willing to accept it, unless you include this one as well, who is the author of their sedition. And they have called this one son of God, not because they pay very much reverence to God, but because they are exalting this one greatly” (εἰ μὲν δὴ μηδένα ἄλλον ἐθεράπευον οὗτοι πλὴν ἓνα θεόν, ἣν ἄν τις αὐτοῖς ἴσως πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ἀτενὴς λόγος. νυνὶ δὲ τὸν ἐναγκος φανέντα τοῦτον ὑπερβηρῆσκέουσιν, καὶ ὅμως οὐδὲν πλημμελεῖν νομίζουσι περὶ τὸν θεόν, εἰ καὶ ὑπηρέτης αὐτοῦ θεραπευθήσεται. εἰ <δὲ> διδάξαις αὐτοὺς ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος ἐκείνου παῖς, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνός γε πάντων πατήρ, ὃν μόνον ὡς ἀληθῶς δεῖ σέβειν, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι θέλοιεν, εἰ μὴ καὶ τοῦτον, ὅσπερ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς τῆς στάσεως ἀρχηγέτης. καὶ ὠνόμασαν γε τοῦτον θεοῦ υἱόν, οὐχ ὅτι τὸν θεὸν σφόδρα σέβουσιν, ἀλλ’ ὅτι τοῦτον σφόδρα αὔξουσιν). It is significant that Origen’s comment is that somebody might think Celsus has said something convincing here (πιθανόν τι). Origen very seldom makes concessions to Celsus.

<sup>79</sup> “Das Interesse am Logosgedanken (hängt) in erster Linie *an der dadurch erzielten Würdigung der Person Jesu*” (Bousset 1965:317–18, my italics).

that was acceptable to the educated. But this, which Bousset with good reason considered plausible as regards the apologists of the second century, can by the same reasoning be considered plausible as regards intellectuals with a similar philosophical education in the first century. And the same will hold good for later times too. Origen's explanation of how he understands Jesus as God incarnate shows how reluctant he is to accept the simple belief of the congregation in Jesus as God, and the high degree to which he draws on the Logos doctrine in order to justify that belief,<sup>80</sup> a degree so high that he in some passages *de facto* contradicts the doctrine of incarnation (as it is normally understood). Thus he asserts that the Logos "was not circumscribed" (οὐ περιγεγραμμένος τις), "as if the Logos did not exist anywhere outside the body and soul of Jesus," and that *Jesus was the Logos in the sense that the divine Logos spoke through the body and soul of Jesus*, just as God was speaking through the prophets, or Apollo was speaking through Pythia.<sup>81</sup> Origen's position was not unique. As Loofs pointed out, the idea of incarnation in antiquity was not clearly distinguished from the idea of *inspiration*, even as late as in the 5th century.<sup>82</sup> The same may well have been the case in the Prologue of John.

Sct Clemensvej 66  
4760 Vordingborg  
Denmark  
hpthyssen@c.dk

HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN THYSSEN

---

<sup>80</sup> Origen answers the criticisms of Celsus, cited above, in *C. Cels.* VIII 14 by appealing to the doctrine of emanation in Heb 1:3 and the concept of Wisdom in Wisd. 7:25–26 (which is really about the Logos, as I remarked earlier). He even applies the Neoplatonic concept of "making hypostasis": θεῶ τοιοῦτον υἷὸν μονογενῇ ὑφίστανται.

<sup>81</sup> *C. Cels.* II 9; cf. IV 5; IV 12; and *Comm. in Matth.* 65: *Deus Verbum non est corporeo ambitu circumclusus*, to which the comment of Loofs is: "Das sehr durchsichtige Gewand andersartiger Vorstellungen," and "die Inkarnation ist auch hier nur gesteigerte Inspiration" (1959:156).

<sup>82</sup> Loofs 1959:71.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bousset, Wilhelm  
1965 *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus*. 5th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. (1st ed. 1913.)
- Bultmann, Rudolf  
1953 *Das Evangelium des Johannes*. 13th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. (1st ed. 1941.)
- Burney, C.F.  
1926 "Christ as the APXH of Creation." *Journal of Theological Studies* 27:160–177.
- Cullmann, Oscar  
1957 *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Davies, W.D.  
1970 *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. 3rd. ed. London: S.P.C.K.
- Dunn, James D.G.  
1980 *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. London: SMC Press.
- Dörrie, Heinrich  
1976 *Platonica Minora*. (Studia et testimonia antiqua, 8.) Munich: Fink.
- Eltester, Friedrich-Wilhelm  
1958 *Eikon im Neuen Testament*. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, 52.) Berlin: Töpelmann.
- Harnack, Adolf von  
1931 *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*. 5th ed. Tübingen. Mohr.
- Hurtado, Larry W.  
2003 *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.
- Loofs, Friedrich  
1959 *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte*. 6th ed. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- Marcovich, Miroslav  
1990 (ed.) *Pseudo-Iustinus: Cohortatio ad Graecos. De Monarcia. Oratio ad Graecos*. (Patristische Texte und Studien, 32.) Berlin and New York: de Gruyter.
- Nautin, Pierre  
1973 "Genèse 1,1–2, de Justin à Origène." In *In Principio: Interprétations des premiers versets de la Genèse* (Études augustinienes, 8), Paris, 61–94.

Norden, Eduard

1913 *Agnostos Theos*. Leipzig.

Riedweg, Christoph

1994 *Ps.-Justin (Markell von Ankyra?), Ad Graecos de vera religione (bisher "Cohortatio ad Graecos")*: Einleitung und Kommentar. 2 vols. Basel: Reinhardt.

Schimanowski, Gottfried

1985 *Weisheit und Messias: Die jüdischen Voraussetzungen der urchristlichen Präexistenzchristologie*. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament; 2. Reihe, 17.) Tübingen: Mohr.

Sellin, Ernst

1905 *Die Spuren griechischer Philosophie im Alten Testament*. Leipzig: Deicher.

Windisch, Hans

1914 "Die göttliche Weisheit der Juden und die Paulinische Christologie." In *Neutestamentliche Studien für Georg Heinrici zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Deissmann and H. Windisch (Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 6), Leipzig, 220–234.

# UN VANDALISME D'ÉTAT EN EXTRÊME-ORIENT? LES DESTRUCTIONS DE LIEUX DE CULTE DANS L'HISTOIRE DE LA CHINE ET DU JAPON

NATHALIE KOUAMÉ AND VINCENT GOOSSAERT

## *Summary*

Throughout Chinese and Japanese history, state initiatives have led to the physical destruction of buildings of worship, for a large variety of reasons. The authors, historians of Japan and China respectively, attempt to analyse the whole breadth of such cases of destruction, asking how and why physical violence can be part of a religious policy. The notion of 'vandalism', created during the French Revolution to label the revolutionary state's destruction of church property and other symbols of the past, seems a stimulating way of thinking about this kind of violence that should not be taken for granted or as inevitable consequences of state control over religion. Far from incidental, the authors argue, destroying temples was often a purposeful, well thought out choice within a larger repertoire of ways to deal with religious institutions.

The first part of the article sketches a typology of destruction according to context and motivation, ranging from an authoritarian reorganization of space (destruction might then be mitigated by reconstruction elsewhere) to targeted retaliation, to comprehensive repression. While not all types of 'vandalism' are attested in both China and Japan, cultural-political influences between the two areas, and some shared religious culture, make the comparison illuminating. The second part of the article deals with the symbolical-political meanings of the destructive praxis.

« Vandalisme » : « Je créai le mot pour tuer la chose » disait l'abbé Grégoire, l'inventeur de ce néologisme qui connut un succès immédiat, dès son apparition dans la France révolutionnaire, et passa sans difficulté à la postérité. Pendant longtemps, parce qu'il exprimait des prises de positions politiques et/ou esthétiques,<sup>1</sup> ce terme

---

<sup>1</sup> La notion de vandalisme implique fréquemment une appréciation sur la valeur

de « vandalisme » eut une connotation exclusivement péjorative. Mais, depuis peu, il a fini par acquérir le statut et la valeur d'un concept historiographique, objet de colloques et de publications.<sup>2</sup> Cela dit, même lorsque ce mot est utilisé de façon scientifique, il garde toute l'expressivité que Grégoire avait voulu lui donner. C'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles il est tentant de s'approprier le terme pour décrire et penser les actes de destruction de biens religieux qui ont ponctué l'histoire de l'Extrême-Orient à travers les siècles.

En effet, on retrouve dans l'histoire de la Chine et dans celle du Japon des épisodes plus ou moins violents de destructions matérielles de bâtiments et d'objets de culte, qui rappellent la période du vandalisme révolutionnaire et de la déchristianisation. Dans cette partie du monde, il est souvent arrivé que des lieux de culte soient rasés, des icônes brisées, des textes sacrés brûlés et, dans la foulée, des religieux chassés ou contraints à se défroquer.<sup>3</sup> Ces actes de destruction ont même pu constituer, à certains moments de l'histoire de ces deux pays, un aspect majeur de la politique religieuse menée par leurs pouvoirs politiques. Car, de fait, en

---

artistique de ce qui est détruit, mais nous n'aborderons pas cet aspect esthétique dans le présent article.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Vovelle, *Religion et Révolution : La déchristianisation de l'an II*, Paris : Hachette 1976 ; Albert Soboul, *La Civilisation et la Révolution française*, Paris : Arthaud 1982, 405–430 ; Serge Bianchi, *La Révolution culturelle de l'An II*, Paris : Aubier 1982 ; *Révolution française et « vandalisme révolutionnaire » : Actes du colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand, 15–17 décembre 1988*, Paris : Universitas 1992. Pour les autres périodes historiques que la Révolution française, voir : Olivier Christin, *Une révolution symbolique : L'iconoclasme huguenot et la reconstruction catholique*, Paris : Les éditions de Minuit 1991 et Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu : La violence au temps des troubles de religion, Vers 1525-vers 1610*, Paris : Champ Vallon 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Ce constat est aussi valable pour la Corée qui ne peut être évoquée ici. Signalons simplement que la dynastie des Yi du pays de Choson (1392–1910) a engagé à partir du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle une vaste politique anti-bouddhique qui a visé la suppression de nombreux temples, l'épuration du clergé et la confiscation de biens religieux.

Chine comme au Japon, l'État fut le principal responsable de ces violences, du moins dans les cas de figure les plus spectaculaires.

C'est ce vandalisme étatique, compris comme la destruction volontaire de biens matériels relevant du domaine religieux par des représentants de la force publique, qui constituera l'objet du présent article. Ou plutôt, ce sont les multiples formes que ce vandalisme d'État a prises dans l'histoire de la Chine et dans celle du Japon qui nous intéresseront ici. En effet, la multiplicité des cibles visées (petits sanctuaires isolés, riches monastères ou, plus globalement, ordres religieux et religions constituées) ainsi que l'extrême variété des motivations des appareils d'État « vandales » ne peuvent que susciter l'intérêt de l'historien des religions qui constate par ailleurs que, de façon globale, les rapports entre État et institutions religieuses semblent avoir été plus sereins dans l'histoire de la Chine et du Japon qu'ils ne le furent dans celle des pays d'Extrême-Occident. De fait, tout au long des siècles, ces deux pays extrême-orientaux ont su élaborer un univers religieux pluraliste dont leurs États successifs se sont en général fort bien accommodés : toutes sortes de religions s'y sont développées (bouddhisme, confucianisme, taoïsme, shintô, puis christianisme et islam), cohabitant de telle sorte qu'il est possible de dire que le Continent et l'Archipel ont presque toujours été terres de tolérance religieuse, voire de syncretisme. Comment expliquer, alors, les faits de vandalisme qui ont marqué leur histoire ?

Il se peut qu'une démarche résolument comparative apporte une réponse à cette question. En effet, confronter les vandalismes d'État de la Chine et du Japon en mettant en exergue leurs différences et leurs points communs, à la fois sur le plan de la chronologie, des modes opératoires et des motivations, peut être un bon moyen d'aller à l'essentiel, c'est-à-dire de comprendre comment et pourquoi les actes de vandalisme constituent une partie intégrante de l'histoire religieuse de ces deux pays. Une telle comparaison n'est bien sûr possible que parce que les deux civilisations ont en commun de fortes affinités religieuses : nous venons déjà de dire un mot de la communauté des courants spirituels (qui existe surtout en ce

qui concerne le bouddhisme et le taoïsme) et de la similitude entre les attitudes tolérantes des appareils d'État ; il faudrait ajouter à cela la ressemblance architecturale des lieux de culte ainsi que l'existence, dans le passé, d'innombrables échanges d'idées, d'objets et d'hommes qui ont rapproché et nourri la spiritualité des deux civilisations. Cela étant, il faut d'emblée préciser que, en matière de vandalisme d'État, aucun des deux pays ne semble jamais avoir imité l'autre, ce qui rend plus intéressante encore l'existence de ce phénomène historique qui, dans ses multiples manifestations, a surtout procédé de mécanismes propres à chacune des deux aires considérées.

Compte tenu de l'ampleur du sujet, nous procéderons en deux temps. Tout d'abord, nous construirons une typologie des différents types de vandalisme, qui distinguera les interventions des appareils d'État selon les buts explicitement poursuivis. Puis, nous développerons des analyses plus théoriques sur le phénomène de la destruction des biens religieux. A chacune de ces étapes, nous avons fait le choix d'étirer au maximum le champ notionnel induit par le terme de vandalisme, de sorte que toute destruction de bâtiment ou d'objet religieux entrera dans notre propos. C'est ainsi que nous comptons revisiter cette notion qui, jusqu'à présent, a surtout été mise en valeur par des historiens de la Révolution française. En fait, notre ambition est qu'en exploitant ainsi jusqu'au bout les potentialités du mot de l'abbé Grégoire, la réalité bien particulière qu'il désigne — soit la destruction de choses sacrées, et notamment de bâtiments saints — puisse être considérée comme un objet d'étude historique à part entière, qui n'est pas nécessairement un phénomène accidentel et, de surcroît, peut dépasser le cadre strict de l'histoire des crises religieuses. En d'autres termes, le point de départ de notre réflexion est l'idée que détruire un lieu ou un objet de culte ne peut constituer un acte anodin et que, quelles que soient les raisons et les circonstances de la destruction, le geste lui-même mérite de retenir toute l'attention de l'historien.

### 1. *Esquisse d'une typologie des vandalismes d'État en Extrême-Orient*

En Chine et au Japon, les actes de vandalisme commis par l'État ont très souvent consisté à détruire des lieux de culte.<sup>4</sup> C'est même là sans doute l'une des caractéristiques premières du vandalisme en Extrême-Orient, qui contraste sur ce point avec le vandalisme de la période révolutionnaire française, qui n'a pas nécessairement rasé les bâtiments des églises.<sup>5</sup> Nous nous pencherons donc tout naturellement dans cet article sur cet aspect typique du vandalisme extrême-oriental. Cela dit, ces démolitions totales ou partielles de bâtiments religieux en Chine et au Japon ont aussi été accompagnées d'attaques portées contre des objets de dévotion et/ou des professionnels de la religion, car chaque fois il s'agissait de remettre

---

<sup>4</sup> Au Japon, on fait traditionnellement la distinction entre deux types fondamentaux de bâtiments religieux : d'une part les temples (ou monastères) bouddhiques (*tera*, *jiin*, etc.), d'autre part les sanctuaires shintô (*jinja*, *yashiro*, *chinju*, etc.) ; le mot *jisha*, qui signifie littéralement « temples [bouddhiques] et sanctuaires [shintô] », fait figure de terme générique et, à ce titre, pourrait presque être traduit en français par l'expression de « lieux de culte [japonais] ». Malgré cette distinction de base, il existe au Japon de très nombreux lieux de culte de caractère synchrétique, qui admettent des éléments empruntés à la fois au bouddhisme et au shintô. Il existe également dans l'Archipel toutes sortes d'édifices qui n'entrent pas dans cette distinction bouddhisme/shintoïsme : ermitages d'ascètes, églises chrétiennes, etc. Le présent article nous permet cependant de garder la distinction très imparfaite entre « temples bouddhiques » et « sanctuaires shintô » puisque ce sont principalement ces lieux de culte-là (synchrétiques ou pas) qui furent les cibles du vandalisme d'État. En ce qui concerne la Chine, nous employons le terme générique de « temple » pour désigner ensemble toutes les formes de lieux réservés à une pratique religieuse, le plus souvent consacrés à des saints locaux ; les institutions spécifiquement bouddhiques ou taoïstes sont nommées monastères.

<sup>5</sup> Voir sur ce point le rappel de Serge Bianchi dans son article sur « Le 'vandalisme' anti-féodal et le 'vandalisme' anti-religieux dans le sud de l'Ile-de-France de 1789 à l'an III », *Révolution française et « vandalisme révolutionnaire »*, *op. cit.*, p. 166. Cette particularité de la Chine et du Japon explique que, pour notre travail, le terme de « vandalisme » nous convient beaucoup mieux que celui d'« iconoclisme », d'étymologie et de sens plus restreints.

en question une situation religieuse où des biens et des hommes étaient engagés.

Sur le Continent comme dans l'Archipel, les motivations qui furent à l'origine des actes de vandalisme sont extrêmement diverses. La typologie proposée dans les lignes suivantes met en exergue cinq catégories de vandalisme d'État, énumérées dans l'ordre du degré d'hostilité manifestée à l'encontre des lieux, des institutions et des hommes de religion. La chronologie des faits est volontairement sacrifiée à la construction de types idéaux.

#### Détruire pour réorganiser un espace local

La première catégorie comprend toutes les destructions qui furent principalement motivées par le souci de gérer un espace local donné (ville ou village, circonscription administrative, entité politique). Dans ce cas de figure, les destructions procédèrent moins d'une animosité particulière des pouvoirs à l'égard du monde religieux, que de leur volonté de contrôler la répartition des lieux de culte et des professionnels de la religion dans une aire donnée.

Un des meilleurs exemples de cette catégorie de destruction est celui des multiples démolitions de bâtiments religieux qui, dans le Japon médiéval du <sup>xvi</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle et le Japon moderne du <sup>xvii</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle, accompagnèrent le processus d'urbanisation de l'Archipel lorsque celui-ci fut commandé par les pouvoirs politiques. Ainsi, à la fin de la période des guerres civiles, le général Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), qui avait réussi à réunifier politiquement le Japon, s'employa à transformer la capitale impériale de Kyôto, restée pour tous, malgré la décadence des institutions publiques qu'elle abritait, le point de référence ultime, sur le plan politique et culturel. Dans les années 1580 et surtout 1590, la cité fut totalement remodelée : constructions nouvelles (résidences, grande douve périphérique circulaire), redécoupage du tracé urbain, ségrégation socio-spatiale de la population. La création d'un « quartier de temples [bouddhiques] » (*teramachi*) à la périphérie orientale de la ville fut l'un des grands axes de ce projet urbanistique novateur. En y transférant



de nombreux temples, il semblerait que Hideyoshi ait voulu tout à la fois libérer l'espace occupé dans le centre urbain par ces établissements, rompre le lien existant entre eux et leurs ouailles, et opposer une barrière matérielle aux éventuelles incursions ennemies. Ce faisant, Hideyoshi avait sans doute à l'esprit le souvenir de la puissance des sectes bouddhiques qui, un demi-siècle plus tôt, avaient menacé la paix de la cité impériale.<sup>6</sup>

Après Hideyoshi, pendant le shōgunat des Tokugawa (1603–1867), le principe de séparer dans l'espace urbain les principales catégories de la population (samurais, artisans, marchands)<sup>7</sup> et, partant, l'idée de concentrer dans des quartiers distincts les établissements religieux et leur personnel furent adoptés de façon systématique dans les villes les plus typiques de l'époque, celles que les historiens appellent *jōkamachi*, parce qu'elles se trouvaient « au pied des châteaux » des grands féodaux (*daimyō*). Là encore, les temples étaient détruits pour être rebâties ensemble, plus loin, la plupart du temps à la périphérie de la ville. Comme à l'époque de Hideyoshi, ces *teramachi* devaient continuer à servir le prince de diverses façons : militaire (ceinture protectrice de la *jōkamachi*), politique (contrôle du clergé) et idéologique (affirmation du principe de la ségrégation spatiale des ordres fonctionnels).

---

<sup>6</sup> Pour quelques détails supplémentaires sur les mesures de Toyotomi Hideyoshi, voir Asao Naohiro (*et alii*), *Kyōto-fu no rekishi*, Tôkyô : Yamakawa Shuppansha 1999, 168–172 ; Hayashiya Tatsusaburō (dir.), *Kyōto, Rekishi to bunka : I. Seiji-shōgyō*, Tôkyô-Kyōto : Heibonsha 1994, 105–111 ; Ikegami Hiroko, *Shokuhō seiken to Edo bakufu*, Tôkyô : Kōdansha 2002, 272–275.

<sup>7</sup> Inspirée du confucianisme chinois, l'idéologie officielle du régime des Tokugawa distinguait quatre ordres principaux : les samurais (*shi*), les paysans (*nō*), les artisans (*kō*), les marchands (*shō*). L'empereur et les aristocrates de la cour impériale de Kyōto, les ecclésiastiques, les parias et toutes sortes de personnes encore se trouvaient donc en dehors de ce système quadrifonctionnel qui accordait la prééminence aux samourais. Sur les classes sociales du Japon moderne, voir les six volumes de Kurushima Hiroshi (*et alii*), *Shirīzu, Kinsei no mibunteki shūen*, Tôkyô : Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 2000.

Mais, dans les *jôkamachi* de l'époque moderne, tout comme dans la Kyôto du Bas Moyen Âge, les destructions de lieux de culte restaient finalement très relatives, puisqu'on reconstruisait aussitôt. D'autres exemples historiques montrent que l'acte de démolition afin de réorganiser l'espace d'une ville pouvait être définitif. Ce fut le cas de la Chine, à partir des premières années du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle. De fait, si pendant la période impériale les temples restèrent éparpillés dans l'ensemble du tissu urbain, sans aucun quartier spécialisé, au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle, la mise en place de politiques urbaines modernistes, qui impliquait la destruction des ruelles étroites et des arches (*pailou*) marquant l'entrée des quartiers et des temples ainsi que le développement des avenues, des tramways et autres équipements, entraîna la destruction irrémédiable d'un grand nombre de bâtiments religieux. Notons que, chez les édiles, de telles destructions mêlaient de façon étroite la nécessité objective de modernisation urbaine et la volonté de lutter contre les « superstitions ». La situation sur le terrain variait suivant les cas, allant d'une destruction brutale à des déménagements négociés (compensations, aide à la construction d'un nouveau temple en un autre lieu).

Au-delà des travaux d'aménagements urbains, des destructions ont pu aussi être l'expression d'une volonté de recomposer l'ensemble du tissu social autour des institutions religieuses. La politique religieuse d'un des plus grands personnages historiques du Japon, le seigneur Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628–1700), illustre parfaitement cette catégorie du vandalisme d'État motivé par un souci de gestion socio-politique d'un large espace, en l'occurrence la totalité d'un domaine féodal.<sup>8</sup>

Le coup d'envoi de cette politique fut lancé en l'an 1666, cinq ans après que Mitsukuni ait succédé à son père au poste de *daimyô*

---

<sup>8</sup> Sur l'interprétation de la politique religieuse de Tokugawa Mitsukuni, voir Nathalie Kouamé, *Le Sabre et l'Encens, ou comment les fonctionnaires du fief de Mito présentent dans un 'Registre des destructions' daté de l'an 1666 l'audacieuse politique religieuse de leur seigneur Tokugawa Mitsukuni*, Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, 2005.

du domaine de Mito. Cette année-là, il donna l'ordre aux fonctionnaires de son fief de démolir (*hakyaku, tsubushi*) quantité de temples bouddhiques. Des sources permettent d'une part de saisir l'importance des destructions effectuées pendant plusieurs années, et d'autre part de connaître le nom et le profil des temples visés par Mitsukuni et son administration. Sur le premier de ces aspects, l'historien ne peut que constater l'ampleur des dégâts : on a pu estimer qu'à partir de 1666 plus de sept cents temples bouddhiques au moins ont été détruits et plus de deux cents bonzes ou ascètes, défroqués — pour un domaine comprenant officiellement environ deux mille temples bouddhiques et quatre cent ascètes.<sup>9</sup> Une telle opération modifiait donc sensiblement le paysage institutionnel du fief de Mito. Par ailleurs, en ce qui concerne le type d'établissements démolis, il est clair qu'on s'en prit à tous les temples dont les desservants étaient jugés incompetents ou débauchés, mais il est important de constater aussi que tous les temples sans paroissiens et/ou sans revenus suffisants furent également condamnés à disparaître.

Inversement, les fonctionnaires de Mito se soucièrent de laisser en place les temples dans les localités où il en manquait, même lorsque leurs religieux n'étaient pas exemplaires ; dans ces cas-là, on trouvait un remplaçant plus digne. Ces autorités cherchaient en l'occurrence à offrir à la population les services funéraires des bonzes selon le principe déclaré, par elles, que « les moines ont pour vocation de s'occuper du problème de la mort ». C'est que, contrairement à une idée largement répandue parmi les historiens japonais qui interprètent les faits en tenant compte de l'engagement résolument confucianiste du seigneur de Mito, celui-ci ne cherchait pas à s'attaquer aux temples bouddhiques par antibouddhisme. D'ailleurs, lui-même a créé, rénové ou protégé un certain nombre de temples tout au long de son mandat de *daimyô*. En revanche,

---

<sup>9</sup> Le calcul a été fait par l'historien Tamamuro Fumio dans l'ouvrage du collectif éditorial nommé Mito Shi Shi Hensan Inkai : *Mito shi shi, Chûkan (ichi)*, Mito 1991 (1<sup>ère</sup> édition : 1968), 847.

tout indique que ce seigneur a voulu réorganiser la carte institutionnelle de son fief, c'est-à-dire faire en sorte que les temples de son domaine y soient partout en quantité raisonnable et suffisante (pour pouvoir prendre en charge les funérailles de la population), de taille correcte (pour bénéficier d'un casuel minimal), et de bonnes mœurs. En d'autres termes, il semblerait que Mitsukuni ait voulu créer un réseau équilibré et régulier de paroisses, où les temples et leurs desservants seraient au service de la population (rites funéraires) tout en exécutant certaines tâches pour l'État (tenue de registres d'état-civil, chaque individu étant rattaché obligatoirement à un temple selon les lois shōgunales).

Admettre que la politique religieuse du seigneur de Mito eut un caractère très administratif permet de comprendre pourquoi celui-ci s'en prit également aux innombrables petits sanctuaires shintōs qui parsemaient son domaine. En effet, à partir de ces mêmes années 1660, Mitsukuni engagea des mesures de destruction à l'encontre des sanctuaires « inutiles », apparus bien souvent à une époque tardive. Pour ces lieux de culte aussi, certaines sources montrent que la vague de destruction fut dévastatrice : des centaines, peut-être des milliers de minuscules sanctuaires furent détruits pendant trois décennies.<sup>10</sup> Parallèlement, à l'instar des mesures prises à l'égard des temples bouddhiques, les autorités de Mito cherchèrent à valoriser la position des sanctuaires shintōs anciens, importants ou desservis par un prêtre (*chinju*), dont le nombre tripla pendant le mandat de Mitsukuni, moins par l'effet de constructions effectives que par la promotion des sanctuaires déjà existant. Notons que les destructions furent peu douloureuses pour le clergé shintō, puisque

---

<sup>10</sup> Une hagiographie officielle de Mitsukuni écrite au lendemain de sa disparition, en 1701, et intitulée *Gikō Gyōjitsu* (« L'œuvre de Gikō »), évoque d'une part la destruction de « 3 818 sanctuaires incorrects » (*inshi*), et d'autre part celle de « 997 temples bouddhiques récemment construits ». Si ces deux chiffres ne doivent pas être pris à la lettre, ils indiquent l'importance des opérations de destruction. Signalons que la chronologie précise de ces destructions massives est encore très mal connue.

beaucoup de ces lieux de culte étaient en fait gérés collectivement ou individuellement par des villageois laïcs : ceux-ci ne furent ni défréqués, ni chassés. En revanche, bon nombre de bonzes ou d'ascètes ayant desservi un temple bouddhique condamné à la destruction durent revenir à la vie laïque, c'est-à-dire se faire paysans ou citadins, les autorités de Mito leur laissant le choix de leur nouveau statut social.

Cette audacieuse politique religieuse qui visait à apporter régularité et équilibre au réseau des établissements religieux fut reprise deux siècles et demi plus tard par l'État de Meiji (1868–1912) à l'échelle de l'Archipel entier. Cette fois-ci, on voulait s'assurer qu'il n'y aurait qu'un seul sanctuaire shintô par village (*isson issha*) ou par unité administrative urbaine ; de cette façon on pourrait mieux soutenir financièrement les très nombreux établissements — près de deux cent mille! — d'un shintô remplissant désormais le rôle de support idéologique de l'État. C'est ainsi que les autorités se mirent à détruire et, surtout, à fusionner quantité de sanctuaires. Ces opérations, qui eurent surtout lieu entre 1906 et 1912, après la guerre russo-japonaise, touchèrent des dizaines de milliers de lieux de culte et, contrairement aux remaniements de Mitsukuni, ne se firent pas sans protestation de la part des prêtres ou des fidèles laïcs.<sup>11</sup>

On ne trouve presque pas dans l'histoire de la Chine de telles mesures de remodelage du paysage socio-religieux. La seule tentative faite par l'État chinois au cours de son histoire qui puisse être comparée aux reconstructions autoritaires du réseau des institutions religieuses opérées au Japon est celle du fondateur de la dynastie Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang (règne Hongwu, 1368–1398), le plus audacieux des réformateurs religieux en Chine entre la dynastie des Han (206 av. J.-C.-220 ap. J.-C.) et le début du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle. Zhu Yuanzhang voulut limiter strictement les cultes autorisés et entièrement

---

<sup>11</sup> Wilbur Fridell, *Japanese Shrine Mergers 1906–1912*, Tôkyô : Sophia University Press 1973.

remodeler bouddhisme et taoïsme. Certes, il ne fut pas le premier à fixer des quotas de monastères bouddhiques et taoïstes par circonscriptions administratives, mais il fut le seul à ordonner que les monastères devenus surnuméraires soient fusionnés avec ceux qui étaient reconnus. En d'autres termes, il fit transférer dans les établissements admis les religieux, les textes, les statues, etc. des monastères jugés désormais superflus. La mesure, audacieuse, ne fut appliquée qu'en certains lieux. Après la mort de l'empereur, ses successeurs, sans désavouer sa politique, ne prirent plus la peine de contrôler aussi drastiquement les institutions religieuses, et bon nombre de celles qui avaient été supprimées réapparurent, aux côtés d'autres nouvellement créées.

Détruire pour purger des lieux de culte dont les desservants ont un comportement incorrect

On a vu qu'au Japon, dans le fief moderne de Mito, les temples dont les desservants étaient loin de remplir les conditions requises par la discipline ecclésiastique furent une des principales cibles de la politique de destruction de Tokugawa Mitsukuni. Quelques générations plus tard, dans les années 1840, le neuvième *daimyô* de Mito, Tokugawa Nariaki (1800–1860), reprit partiellement la politique de son ancêtre en ordonnant la destruction des temples mal desservis de son fief.<sup>12</sup> Cela dit, dans le cas de ces deux seigneurs japonais, les attaques portées contre les temples aux religieux ignares, fornicateurs ou cupides ne constituaient pas l'objectif central de la politique religieuse engagée : tandis que Mitsukuni visait essentiellement à constituer dans son domaine un réseau de paroisses shintô-bouddhiques, Nariaki, pour sa part, leader de l'École (nationaliste) de Mito, ambitionnait surtout la séparation du shintô et du bouddhisme (voir *infra*). De façon générale, le Japon connut peu d'épisodes de purges ecclésiastiques.

---

<sup>12</sup> Mito Shi Shi Hensan Inkai, *Mito shi shi, Chûkan (san)*, Mito 1984 (1<sup>ère</sup> édition : 1976), 297–306.

En revanche, dans l'histoire de la Chine, les mœurs des desservants ont été fréquemment critiquées par des représentants de l'État, et les diatribes de type anticlérical<sup>13</sup> ont souvent servi à justifier la destruction de lieux de culte. De telles accusations se retrouvaient particulièrement, mais pas uniquement, chez les intellectuels se réclamant du confucianisme. De fait, le modèle de vie incarné par les moines et moniales bouddhistes, et adopté par une partie des taoïstes (l'ordre Quanzhen, et une petite minorité de l'ordre Zhengyi), qui exige entre autres le vœu de chasteté, était en contradiction avec l'exigence confucianiste de transmettre le patrilignage et d'assurer le culte des ancêtres par les descendants mâles. Au-delà du célibat, et des signes qui distinguaient les religieux des laïcs (tonsure pour les bouddhistes, costume), c'est tout un mode de vie communautaire qui suscitait fascination, incompréhension et répulsion. Et pourtant, objectivement, la ligne de démarcation entre laïques et ecclésiastiques n'était pas si claire : le religieux qui quittait sa famille (*chujia*) entraînait dans une autre famille, puisqu'il devenait le fils par adoption du maître qui l'acceptait comme novice. Du reste, la plupart du temps, la singularité du mode de vie bouddhique fut acceptée ou tolérée.

Mais, le discours anticlérical persista pendant des siècles, se fixant sur le respect des règles disciplinaires, et ceci tout particulièrement à la fin de l'époque impériale, quand la morale sexuelle officielle se fit de plus en plus stricte. Les anticléricaux étaient outrés du libre contact entre femmes et religieux ; ils y voyaient les prémices d'inévitables débauches — ce qui était à l'occasion avéré et provoquait alors de retentissants scandales. En tout cas, dès les premiers siècles de notre ère, et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, le folklore anticlérical concernant la vie dans les communautés religieuses se montra particulièrement imaginaire : on se représentait des chambres secrètes où les moines cachaient des femmes, souvent capturées et retenues de force, des pratiques de sorcellerie et, bien entendu, les

---

<sup>13</sup> « Anticléricalisme en Chine », numéro 24 de *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, 2002.

tours les plus pendables pour extorquer de l'argent aux naïfs fidèles.

Démêler le fantasme de la réalité dans les récits anticléricaux chinois est impossible, mais les cas attestés ont toujours nourri les accusations généralisées. On compte à toutes les périodes de l'histoire du Continent des scandales forçant les magistrats à intervenir, et, la faute constatée, à chasser les religieux, toujours défroqués, et souvent bastonnés. Parfois, la destruction du lieu du crime constitua la sanction suprême. Néanmoins, si les exemples de destructions de lieux de culte furent nombreux, il s'agit toujours de faits isolés et sans conséquence d'ensemble, et ceci pour deux raisons. D'abord, le bouddhisme chinois, à l'instar du taoïsme, ne s'est presque jamais organisé en « sectes » ou « écoles » centralisées et hiérarchisées où les différents temples et monastères affiliés entretiennent des rapports étroits. Au contraire, chaque temple ou monastère en Chine est totalement indépendant (à l'exception marginale de quelques grands établissements qui disposent d'un petit nombre de filiales). Beaucoup s'organisent en réseaux d'alliance, mais sans que les institutions liées entre elles jouissent du moindre droit de regard sur les autres. Cette fragmentation, qui laisse la place à toutes sortes de configurations négociées localement, empêche les accusations ou persécutions faites contre une institution de s'étendre aux autres.

La seconde raison qui explique le caractère très ponctuel des destructions infligées aux temples du fait de religieux déviants est que, depuis l'époque des Song (960–1279), la plupart des institutions religieuses de Chine sont construites, financées et gérées par des communautés laïques de types divers (communautés territoriales, de village ou de quartier, lignages, guildes et corporations, associations pieuses) qui engagent des religieux, en des termes contractuels, à venir habiter et entretenir leur temple, et à y assurer divers services liturgiques. Les religieux ne sont pas propriétaires des lieux. Aussi, lorsqu'ils se comportent mal (mauvaises mœurs, fréquentations douteuses, conflit avec les chefs de la communauté



ou simonie), les communautés les expulsent et les remplacent par d'autres. L'expulsion peut aussi être décidée par le magistrat. Dans tous les cas, le temple lui-même n'est pas menacé, puisqu'il est le bien d'une communauté qui n'est pas mise en cause.<sup>14</sup>

### Détruire les lieux d'une idéologie hétérodoxe

Dans l'histoire de la Chine et du Japon, comme ailleurs, la religion ayant souvent été porteuse d'une conception globale de l'ordre social, il était inévitable que certains courants entrent en conflit avec les autorités politiques de façon larvée ou ouverte, volontaire ou involontaire. Il est arrivé que, dans ces cas-là, l'État cherchât à éliminer ou endommager durablement les lieux de culte qui représentaient une idéologie jugée hétérodoxe, même lorsque celle-ci n'était pas réellement menaçante.

En Chine, la question de l'orthodoxie, bien plus que celle du comportement des religieux, a motivé tout au long de l'histoire un très grand nombre de destructions. Il convient de distinguer deux cas de figure bien distincts, tant dans les processus et les effets de la destruction que dans les fondements théologiques de celle-ci : d'une part la destruction des sanctuaires consacrés à des cultes « immoraux », d'autre part les tentatives d'éradication de religions constituées, en l'occurrence le bouddhisme, qui ont été menées à plusieurs reprises au cours du premier millénaire.

La catégorie des « cultes immoraux », *yinci* ou *yinsi*, remonte à l'Antiquité chinoise et aux textes fondateurs de la théologie et de la liturgie confucianistes. Ces textes exposaient une vision féodale réglementant les cultes et sacrifices auxquels avaient droit de se livrer les différentes classes sociales, et interdisant tous les autres : se livrer à un culte ou un sacrifice qui n'était pas permis était excessif et immoral (*yin*) et ne pouvait apporter de grâces. La notion de *yin* renvoyait ainsi à la fois à l'interdit, à l'excès (d'argent dépensé, d'émotions exprimées), à l'immoralité (surtout, à la

---

<sup>14</sup> Vincent Goossaert, *Dans les temples de la Chine*, Paris: Albin Michel 2000.

fin de l'empire, à l'immoralité sexuelle) et à l'hétérodoxie, cette dernière notion étant en principe intimement liée à la moralité puisque l'ordre de l'univers et la doctrine du régime impérial sont fondamentalement moraux. La vision féodale disparaît dès les débuts de notre ère, mais jusqu'à la fin de l'empire la notion de « culte immoral » reste vivace, même si elle fut comprise et appliquée de façons diverses, plus ou moins restrictives, suivant les personnes.<sup>15</sup> Cette notion se distinguait nettement de la condamnation du comportement de certains religieux enfreignant leurs règles, évoquée précédemment : il s'agissait ici de condamner des groupes et des institutions qui étaient fondés sur un rapport incorrect, immoral, entre humains et divinités. Il n'était pas question à proprement parler d'enjeux doctrinaux, mais comme l'État supprimait des lieux de culte considérés comme incorrects dans leur principe théologique même, il est permis de parler de lutte contre l'hétérodoxie.<sup>16</sup> Précisons que cette lutte n'avait rien de rationalisante ou d'anti-religieuse : on reprochait avant tout aux *yinsi* de « profaner » (*xie*) les temples, les dieux et le pays.

Pendant deux mille ans, de la dynastie des Han à la fin de l'empire, en 1912, il y eut dans les villes et les campagnes chinoises des temples consacrés à des saints locaux qui n'étaient pas reconnus par l'État et auraient donc dû être théoriquement classés comme *yinsi* ; cependant, sauf quelques magistrats zélés ou activistes fondamentalistes confucianistes, personne ne s'est attaqué à ces cultes qui fonctionnaient comme des cultes territoriaux et ne remettaient nullement en cause l'ordre social. L'accusation de *yinsi* fut surtout

---

<sup>15</sup> Kojima Tsuyoshi, « Seishi to inshi : Fukken no chihôshi ni okeru kijutsu to rinri », *Tôyô Bunka Kenkyûjo kiyô* 114 (1991) 87–213, fournit une analyse détaillée de la notion de *yinsi* et de ses conséquences concrètes dans la province du Fujian à la fin de l'époque impériale.

<sup>16</sup> Les bouddhistes et surtout les taoïstes ont participé à la lutte contre les « cultes immoraux » ; à l'époque moderne encore la liturgie taoïste inclut des rites de destruction (symbolique) des temples (*pomiao*) des êtres démoniaques qui trompent le peuple et causent des malheurs.

portée envers des cultes fondés sur une moralité divergente. Le cas le plus connu à la fin de l'empire fut celui des Wutong, « cinq pouvoirs », dieux de la richesse soudaine et imméritée, qui accordent de l'argent aux maris en échange des faveurs de leurs femmes.<sup>17</sup> Un autre exemple est celui de Hu Tianbao, saint patron des mariages entre hommes, à qui l'on reprochait de profaner la sainte institution du mariage. On pourrait encore citer l'exemple des temples aux Trois saints qui représentaient le Bouddha encadré de Laozi et de Confucius : « l'immoralité » (ou hétérodoxie) concernait ici la hiérarchie spirituelle. Au <sup>xviii</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle, l'État impérial fit raser quelques centaines de ces temples.

La destruction des *yinsi* fut presque toujours le fait de magistrats zélés voulant être à la hauteur de la tâche d'éducation morale du petit peuple (*jiaohua*) qui constituait l'une de leurs missions. L'hagiographie bureaucratique a fréquemment mis en scène un magistrat arrivant en poste et constatant que le peuple se livre à des cultes immoraux : il se rend immédiatement au temple incriminé, accompagné de ses sbires, pour détruire, par la hache ou le feu, les statues et autres instruments du culte, chasser ou punir les responsables et veiller à l'affectation des bâtiments à une activité morale ; ceux-ci laissent alors la place à un temple confucianiste ou une école. On ne peut douter de la sincérité de ces magistrats zélés, mais force est de constater tout de même que ces destructions spectaculaires offraient l'avantage d'améliorer la réputation, voire la promotion des magistrats vandales. On a souvent cité en exemple ces fonctionnaires n'ayant pas froid aux yeux et passant auprès de l'empereur comme intègres et sans compromission. Di Renjie (630–700) fut l'un d'entre eux, qui deviendra bien plus tard un héros de la littérature policière, le juge Ti. Il ne laissa debout que deux temples après son passage dans une commanderie du sud de

---

<sup>17</sup> Richard von Glahn, « The Enchantment of Wealth : The God Wutong in the social history of Jiangnan », *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51–2 (1991) 651–714.

la Chine. Plus récemment, Tang Bin (1627–1687) est resté célèbre pour avoir été un grand pourfendeur des temples des Wutong.<sup>18</sup> D'autres exemples se comptent par centaines dans les sources historiques.

Il est important de souligner que ces destructions étaient motivées par une attitude profondément religieuse, et d'ailleurs taoïstes et bouddhistes s'y associèrent tout au long du premier millénaire avant de prendre leurs distances avec cette politique de rectification religieuse. Notons que la destruction des temples allait de pair avec d'autres mesures, comme la collecte (parfois par la force) ou l'autodafé des livrets de théâtre et de ballades chantées « immorales ». Ces destructions s'accompagnèrent aussi de tentatives pour empêcher certains rituels mêlant hommes et femmes dans les temples, en particulier la nuit, ou bien pour bannir les médiums, en particulier les femmes médiums, possédées par les dieux et offrant guérison et oracles.<sup>19</sup> Toutes ces mesures de rectification des mœurs religieuses furent souvent sans lendemain.

D'ailleurs, on constate aussi l'efficacité limitée des campagnes occasionnelles de destruction : nombre de temples détruits par les magistrats zélés ont été reconstruits dès leur départ. Certains temples sont même connus pour le nombre spectaculaire des destructions qu'ils ont eu à subir au cours des siècles, ce qui signifie qu'ils ont été plus souvent debout que détruits . . . C'est qu'en effet les zélés ont toujours été en minorité, et l'éclat donné à leurs actions ne doit pas faire oublier l'attitude bien plus prudente de la majorité silencieuse des fonctionnaires. En fait, le magistrat prenait de gros risques en se montrant vandale : toujours étranger dans sa province d'exercice, peu entouré et disposant de maigres moyens, il se retrouvait isolé au milieu de ses administrés. La communauté du

---

<sup>18</sup> Jiang Zhushan, « Tang Bin jinhui Wutong shen — Qingchu zhengzhi jingying daji tongsu wenhua de ge'an », *Xin shixue* 6–2 (1995) 67–110.

<sup>19</sup> Donald Sutton, « From Credulity to Scorn : Confucians Confront the Spirit Mediums in Late Imperial China », *Late Imperial China* 21–2 (2000) 1–39.

temple détruit pouvait toujours se révolter et se venger sur son oppresseur, et une émeute mal maîtrisée pouvait compromettre la carrière du magistrat qui voyait ainsi se retourner contre lui son ambitieux projet. Le dieu lui-même pouvait prendre sa revanche, et les divinités vengeresses qui hantaient le magistrat jusqu'au cauchemar étaient légion dans l'imagerie bureaucratique. Enfin, le fonctionnaire vandale s'exposait à s'aliéner les élites locales, souvent partie prenante des cultes incriminés. Or, sans l'aide de ces élites, le magistrat n'avait aucun pouvoir. L'arrivée à partir de 1905 dans les quartiers et les bourgs d'une administration moderne dotée d'une police changera cependant totalement ces rapports de force : les destructions devinrent alors possibles sur une grande échelle.

En Chine, en dehors des *yinsi*, le vandalisme d'État a aussi pris pour cible les établissements bouddhiques. Mais, tandis que la destruction des *yinsi* fut un fait continu tout au long de deux millénaires, les périodes de vandalisme antibouddhique ont été rares et de courte durée. On en compte trois : celle qui s'est produite en 446, celle de 574–577 et, la plus connue, dite « de l'ère Huichang », datée de 844–845.<sup>20</sup> Loin de viser quelques temples jugés déviants par rapport à l'orthodoxie, ces persécutions s'attaquèrent à l'ensemble de l'Église bouddhique. Les trois accès de persécution furent motivés par diverses raisons : anticléricalisme, certes, mais aussi rejet de l'idéologie bouddhique ; réaction face à l'escalade d'offrandes ostentatoires faites au clergé par l'aristocratie médiévale ; enfin, sentiment de perte de contrôle de la part de l'État face à une Église cohérente et autonome, et de surcroît extrêmement riche. Sur ce dernier point, il est clair que les gouvernants ont voulu s'attaquer au problème de la fuite des paysans se déroband à la conscription et aux corvées par l'ordination (sincère ou intéressée) ; ils ont aussi voulu ramener à des proportions raisonnables les dons fonciers (réels ou simulés) faits aux Églises, qui exemptaient de

---

<sup>20</sup> Paul Demiéville, « L'iconoclasme anti-bouddhique en Chine », *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech*, Paris : PUF 1974, 17–25.

*jure* et *de facto* les terres offertes des charges fiscales qui auraient dues être normalement imposées ; enfin, les autorités ont également tenté de mettre un terme à l'accumulation de métaux précieux dont les monastères usaient ou abusaient, de façon plus ou moins productive (dans les trésors monastiques, servant de banques, pour la confection de statues et autres décors, etc.).<sup>21</sup>

Dans chacune de ces trois grandes persécutions, la violence de l'État se déploya *crescendo*. Au début, il y avait simplement reprise en main : on condamnait des excès ou fixait des limites au nombre et à la richesse des monastères ; puis la pression se faisait de plus en plus forte, conduisant finalement à l'interdiction quasi totale des établissements (seuls quelques monastères consacrés aux prières pour l'empereur étaient épargnés . . .). Le pèlerin japonais Ennin (793–864), qui voyagea dans la Chine des Tang au moment de la dernière et de la plus terrible de ces persécutions, montre clairement combien le vandalisme d'État s'exerça alors à grande échelle, provoquant la disparition d'un très grand nombre de statues, fondues pour en récupérer le métal, de textes et d'objets de culte, qui furent brûlés ou saccagés, et de moines et moniales, condamnés à retourner à l'état laïc.<sup>22</sup> Dès 846, cependant, avec l'accession au trône d'un nouvel empereur, la persécution était totalement levée, et les monastères purent recouvrer ou reconstruire leurs bâtiments et reprendre leurs activités. Si les pertes matérielles, notamment en termes d'œuvres d'art, consécutives à cette répression des années 840 furent très lourdes, on ne saurait dire cependant, comme continue de le prétendre l'historiographie bouddhique, que la persécution fut responsable de changements radicaux dans la doctrine et l'organisation du clergé (la prééminence de l'école Chan, notamment) :

---

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Ch'en, « The economic background of the Hui-ch'ang suppression of Buddhism », *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19 (1956) 67–105.

<sup>22</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China*, New York: Ronald Press 1955, 217–271. Voir aussi, par le même auteur, la traduction du journal d'Ennin : *Ennin's Diary, The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*, New York : Ronald Press 1955.

ces changements ont en réalité des causes plus lointaines et se sont produits sur un temps beaucoup plus long. En tout cas, la version des faits donnée par les bouddhistes nous rappelle à quel point la persécution peut être aussi un outil aux mains du persécuté (du moins quand il en réchappe), qui trouve là un moyen de se réinventer et se poser en martyr.

A partir du x<sup>e</sup> siècle, une répression anti-bouddhique de l'ampleur de celle du siècle précédent devint chose impensable. C'est que la doctrine de la coexistence des trois religions (confucianisme, bouddhisme, taoïsme) qui s'était formée sous les Tang (618–907) devint alors un des piliers durables de l'idéologie impériale : ces trois religions furent désormais considérées comme étant également orthodoxes et, à ce titre, reçurent la protection de l'empire. Même si sous les Ming (1368–1644) et les Qing (1644–1911) la montée en puissance du fondamentalisme confucianiste poussa l'interprétation de cette doctrine dans un sens de plus en plus limitatif (bouddhisme et taoïsme restant tolérés à l'intérieur des monastères, mais leur rôle dans la société étant de plus en plus contrôlé), il n'était plus possible de persécuter les grandes religions constituées.<sup>23</sup>

En revanche, un nouveau pan de la religion chinoise fut, lui, timidement sous les Song (960–1279), puis de manière radicale sous les Ming et les Qing, mis au ban de la société et strictement condamné par l'État : il s'agit de la nébuleuse des groupes sectaires ayant en commun le fait de former des congrégations laïques sans clergé et de s'appuyer sur des écritures millénaristes annonçant un cataclysme où seuls les élus seront sauvés. La persécution de ces groupes fut inégale, notamment parce qu'ils étaient très différents les uns des autres. Certains, très contemplatifs et peu activistes, se noyaient dans le paysage et en dépit de leur caractère illégal pouvaient perdurer assez ouvertement dans les mêmes villages pendant

---

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Brook, « Rethinking Syncretism: The unity of the Three Teachings and their joint worship in Late-Imperial China », *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21 (1993) 13–44.

plusieurs siècles ; on en trouve encore aujourd'hui. En revanche, d'autres basculèrent dans l'insurrection, parce que menés par des leaders convaincus de la fin du monde et/ou enchaînés dans une spirale répression/fuite en avant. L'alternance des épisodes d'agitation et de calme, la diversité des consignes impériales, le zèle variable des magistrats expliquent que les modalités concrètes de l'application des mesures d'interdiction des « sectes » furent extrêmement diverses entre le xv<sup>e</sup> et le xx<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'action des magistrats, quand ils étaient actifs, visait surtout l'arrestation et la condamnation des prédicateurs. Interdits, les groupes bâtaient rarement des lieux de réunion qui auraient facilité la répression. On compte néanmoins un certain nombre de cas où ces communautés sectaires, se sentant en sécurité, construisirent des temples qui furent ensuite saisis par les autorités à l'occasion d'un revirement de situation. Les textes et icônes étaient alors systématiquement brûlés, et les lieux ainsi « nettoyés » réaffectés à des usages « orthodoxes ». On restait donc dans la tradition multiséculaire du vandalisme d'État chinois.<sup>24</sup>

Dans l'Archipel, le vaste mouvement national de vandalisme qui, à partir de l'année 1868, visa la « destruction des statues et des textes [bouddhiques] » (*haibutsu-kishaku*) constitua la plus grave et la plus spectaculaire des atteintes jamais portées au Japon contre des lieux de culte jugés hétérodoxes. Les institutions et les religieux du bouddhisme furent les principales cibles de ce mouvement qui fut en grande partie spontané, c'est-à-dire non planifié, même si, d'une certaine façon, on peut dire que les destructions de type *haibutsu-kishaku* constituèrent une application jusqu'au-boutiste de la politique d'État de *shinbutsu-bunri* (« séparation du shintô et du bouddhisme »).<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Barend ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History*, Leiden: Brill 1992.

<sup>25</sup> Les deux ouvrages de référence pour l'histoire du *haibutsu-kishaku* sont ceux de Murakami (en collaboration), *Meiji Ishin : Shinbutsu-bunri Shiryô*, Tôkyô : Tôhō



La vague iconoclaste se déclencha dès l'annonce faite par le tout jeune gouvernement impérial de l'ère Meiji (1868–1912) de sa nouvelle politique religieuse visant à séparer le culte shintô du culte bouddhique : il s'agissait de distinguer clairement ces deux traditions religieuses qui avaient été jusqu'alors confondues ensemble, au cœur des pratiques et des lieux de culte, par des siècles de syncretisme. Dès les premiers mois de l'année 1868, l'État impérial ordonna que les bonzes desservant les sanctuaires shintôs retournent à la vie laïque, que le vocabulaire bouddhique employé pour désigner les *kami* (divinités du shintô) soit abandonné, qu'on cesse d'utiliser des représentations de bouddhas ou de bodhisattvas à la place d'idoles shintôs, qu'on retire les icônes et objets bouddhiques (gongs, cloches, etc.) des autels de la « Voie des dieux », et que les prêtres shintôs reçoivent désormais des funérailles shintôs. Il est clair qu'à travers toutes ces mesures concrètes les nouvelles autorités cherchaient à valoriser la religion prétendument nationale. De fait, parallèlement à ces instructions, d'autres dispositions légales furent prises pour faire de ce « shintô restauré » dans sa forme originelle (*fukko-shintô*) une religion d'État *de facto* qui permettrait d'unifier les consciences des Japonais et de mieux asseoir l'autorité de droit divin d'un empereur qui venait tout juste de recouvrer ses pouvoirs. En dernière instance, ce shintô régénéré était censé donner au Japon une force spirituelle suffisante pour contrer la menace occidentale surgie depuis les années 1850. Dans ce contexte de redéfinition d'une religion et d'une idéologie nationales, certains se crurent autorisés à exprimer leurs sentiments antibouddhiques.

Le premier coup du *haibutsu-kishaku* fut asséné le 1<sup>er</sup> jour de la 4<sup>ème</sup> lune de l'année 1868 à l'encontre du sanctuaire Sakamoto-Hie,

---

Shoin 1926–29 (1<sup>ère</sup> édition) et de Tamamuro Fumio, *Shinbutsu-bunri*, Tôkyô : Kyôikusha 1977. Pour quelques détails factuels supplémentaires, voir Saeki Etatsu, *Haibutsu kishaku hyakunen: Shiitageraretsuzuketa hotoketachi*, Miyazaki : Kômyakusha 2003 (1<sup>ère</sup> édition : 1988). Parmi l'importante bibliographie consacrée à la politique pro-shintô du gouvernement de Meiji, signalons Helen Hardacre, *Shinto and the State, 1868–1988*, Princeton : Princeton University Press 1989.

situé au pied du très vénérable mont Hiei, au nord-est de la ville de Kyôto. Très vite, une vague de vandalisme déferla dans l'archipel : d'innombrables bâtiments bouddhiques furent supprimés, souvent par les flammes, et leurs biens confisqués, vendus ou détruits ; mais on s'en prit aussi aux sanctuaires shintô : les vandales s'employèrent à les débarrasser de toute trace de bouddhisme, statues, objets cultuels, sutras. Les attaques furent continuelles jusqu'en 1876 environ, même si le mouvement de destruction marqua le pas dès 1871. Certaines régions de l'Archipel furent très touchées, d'autres beaucoup moins. En fait, la carte des actes de vandalisme juxtaposait régions de grande turbulence et zones relativement épargnées. Les environs des deux antiques sanctuaires impériaux d'Ise figuraient parmi les épïcêtres : un quart au moins des temples bouddhiques y furent supprimés. Mais la tempête fut plus dévastatrice encore dans le fief de Toyama (province d'Etchû) où 99% des temples furent rasés ou fusionnés, ainsi que dans le fief de Naegi (province de Mino) et dans l'île d'Oki, où l'ordre fut donné par les dirigeants locaux de détruire la totalité des temples. Les religieux et les établissements bouddhiques des fiefs de Matsumoto (province de Shinano) et de Satsuma eurent également à subir de nombreuses déprédations parce que leurs autorités avaient ordonné leur éradication. Sans aller jusqu'à dire, comme certains l'ont fait, que la moitié des temples bouddhiques du Japon ont été victimes du *haibutsu-kishaku*, il est au moins possible d'affirmer qu'une telle rage destructrice eut des conséquences désastreuses pour le patrimoine folklorique, artistique et historiographique du pays. Si, de nos jours, l'historien a parfois du mal à trouver dans les temples de l'Archipel des témoignages du Japon ancien, c'est bien souvent parce que des vandales de la Restauration de Meiji sont passés par là : prêtres shintô, intellectuels, *daimyô*, fonctionnaires de fiefs et simples roturiers, tous plus ou moins influencés par les théories nationalistes et pro-shintoïsantes des deux courants intellectuels majeurs que furent, à la fin de l'époque d'Edo (1603–1867), les « Études nationales » (*kokugaku*) et l'École de Mito

(*Mito-gaku*).<sup>26</sup> Certains, aussi, réagissaient affectivement aux deux siècles qui venaient de passer pendant lesquels le bouddhisme d'État avait rendu certains membres du clergé bouddhique arrogants et cupides.

Il y eut donc parmi les vandales des représentants des appareils d'État locaux, autrement dit des fiefs seigneuriaux. Il est même arrivé que des membres de l'administration impériale centrale participent eux-mêmes aux déprédations ; ce fut par exemple le cas dans les sanctuaires de Suwa (province de Shinano), où des agents du Bureau des Affaires des Dieux vinrent détruire les salles bouddhiques. Mais, en général, les autorités de Tôkyô semblent avoir cherché à réfréner les ardeurs de tous ceux qui voulurent appliquer avec trop de zèle la politique du *shinbutsu-bunri* : dès les premiers actes de vandalisme, on interdit les destructions arbitraires ou celles motivées par des raisons personnelles. On finit même par renvoyer du gouvernement les promoteurs trop passionnés d'un shintoïsme d'État. Il n'empêche : malgré les dénégations publiques du gouvernement central qui se défendait de prôner une idéologie antibouddhique, la frontière avait été objectivement très mince entre la politique totalement artificielle de « séparation du shintô et du bouddhisme » et l'antibouddhisme des zéloteurs de la « destruction des statues et des textes ». En effet, dans un cas comme dans l'autre, le refus du syncrétisme religieux passait nécessairement par une revalorisation du « shintô » au détriment d'un « bouddhisme » qui avait jusqu'alors dominé le monde des institutions religieuses. En somme, il est à peine exagéré de dire que le seul point qui distingue véritablement les deux notions historiographiques de

---

<sup>26</sup> Voir, par exemple : David Magarey Earl, *Emperor and Nation in Japan : Political Thinkers of the Tokugawa Period*, Seattle : University of Washington Press 1964 ; Joseph Pittau, *Political Thought in Early Meiji Japan*, Cambridge : Harvard University Press 1969 ; Yoshida Toshizumi, *Mito-gaku to Meiji isshin*, Tôkyô : Yoshikawa Kôbunkan 2003.

*shinbutsu bunri* et de *haibutsu kishaku* est le degré de violence avec laquelle on a voulu opérer la distinction entre la Voie des *Kami* et celle des Bouddhas.

Détruire pour parer à une menace directe venant des institutions religieuses

En Chine, le conflit entre les institutions religieuses et l'État ne fut que très rarement frontal et militaire. On connaît des révoltes suscitées par certains groupes sectaires, notamment la grande révolte dans les hautes terres du Hu'nan-Shaanxi-Sichuan en 1796–1803, puis la guerre civile menée par les Taiping (1851–1864), mais ces mouvements n'étaient pas organisés autour de temples. Comme on l'a vu, la menace qui poussait généralement l'État chinois à détruire des temples était le plus souvent d'ordre moral, souvent insidieuse ; elle ne provenait pas de puissantes organisations cléricales, mais de temples isolés.

Dans l'histoire du Japon, en revanche, il est arrivé que certains établissements religieux représentent un très sérieux danger pour l'existence des pouvoirs d'État en place ou en cours d'affirmation. Dans ces cas, la destruction totale ou partielle des établissements menaçants a pu sembler être la meilleure solution pour riposter. Ce type de vandalisme s'est manifesté dans l'Archipel au cours d'un long xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle tourmenté par les guerres civiles et séduit par de puissantes Églises, principalement celle de la Véritable Secte de la Terre pure (bouddhique) et celle de Rome (via ses représentants les Jésuites).

De fait, la puissance de la Véritable Secte de la Terre pure (Jôdo Shinshû), qui connut un essor sans précédent à partir du mandat de l'abbé Rennyo (1415–1499), et l'autorité de l'Eglise catholique, importée par des Occidentaux fraîchement débarqués (1543), venaient de ce qu'elles étaient à même de proposer une conception et une pratique originales du monde et de l'ordre social, qui pouvaient rivaliser avec n'importe quelle idéologie et institution politiques d'un Moyen Âge japonais anarchique livré aux plus forts. Ainsi,

la Jôdo Shinshû promettait à ses fidèles la renaissance dans la Terre pure du Bouddha Amida, à la seule condition qu'ils s'abandonnent en Amida de tout leur cœur, c'est-à-dire qu'ils aient la foi en son vœu fondamental de sauver tous les êtres vivants. Une prédication efficace et l'attention accordée aux femmes et aux petites gens permirent la diffusion de ce message optimiste dans une bonne partie du pays. Par ailleurs, la puissance centripète du grand temple Hongan, l'alliance de classe entre paysans et samouraïs au sein des organisations locales, et l'engagement militaire des fidèles dans les luttes armées du temps donnèrent au mouvement religieux un véritable poids politique et militaire dans ce Bas Moyen Âge politiquement confus. Quant au christianisme, dont la puissance temporelle était supputée plus que visible au Japon, il défendait une idéologie monothéiste, totalitaire, conquérante et exclusive, et par conséquent parfaitement subversive dans une société japonaise accoutumée au syncrétisme religieux et dirigée, à la fin du *xvi*<sup>e</sup> siècle, par des seigneurs de guerre laïcs aspirant à une domination sans partage de l'Archipel.

Tout ceci explique que les trois fameux hégémons de la fin du Moyen Âge aient cherché à s'attaquer aux lieux de culte de la Véritable Secte de la Terre pure ainsi qu'à ceux de l'Église catholique. Dans le premier cas, les destructions furent ponctuelles et partielles. Elles furent même parfois très symboliques : en 1580, au terme d'une guerre de dix années, le général Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) détruisit par le feu la formidable forteresse du temple Hongan après... l'évacuation de ses occupants. Le temple fut reconstruit cinq ans plus tard, tout près de son site antérieur ; celui-ci était désormais occupé par le tout nouveau château d'Ôsaka (1583) de Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), successeur d'Oda et nouveau maître du Japon. De fait, à partir des années 1580, la puissance politico-militaire de la Jôdo Shinshû commença à s'estomper lentement, mais sûrement, au fur et à mesure que cette Église suivait la voie de l'intégration dans l'ordre voulu par Toyotomi Hideyoshi, puis, à partir de 1600, par le clan Tokugawa. En revanche, la disparition des

églises catholiques de l'Archipel fut totale et définitive à partir du moment où Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) inaugura sa politique antichrétienne en 1612.

### Détruire pour réinventer la religion

Dans chacune des quatre grandes catégories de destruction que nous venons de présenter, on retrouve à des degrés divers la volonté de contrôler le monde religieux ou de le remodeler. Dans aucun cas, il ne s'agit d'anti-religion au sens où l'on ne désirerait plus voir exister aucun temple ou établissement religieux quel qu'il soit. Des ambitions de ce type n'ont jamais existé au Japon, alors qu'elles se forment dans la Chine du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle.

La Chine a connu tout au long du siècle dernier un processus de destruction des temples sur une échelle qui n'a sans doute pas d'équivalent dans le monde (sauf en Mongolie) : la très grande majorité du million de temples existant vers 1900 a aujourd'hui disparu. Le processus de destruction, s'il est incontestablement un phénomène moderne, remonte en fait à une période antérieure à l'avènement de la République Populaire et de l'athéisme communiste.

Ces destructions récentes furent la conséquence directe d'un tournant très important dans la politique religieuse de l'État chinois lors des dernières années de l'empire Qing (1644–1911).<sup>27</sup> Face à la crise de l'État et de la société confrontés aux menaces militaires, économiques et idéologiques posées par les puissances occidentales et le Japon, les élites politiques chinoises furent amenées à envisager une remise en cause fondamentale des structures politiques et sociales de l'empire, y compris l'organisation religieuse de la société. En l'occurrence, le manque de cohésion nationale fut attribué à la dispersion des individus dans de multiples communautés religieuses autonomes, tandis que le retard technologique fut mis au compte de l'obscurantisme de ces mêmes communautés.

---

<sup>27</sup> Vincent Goossaert, « Le destin de la religion chinoise au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle », *Social Compass* 50(4) (2003) 429–440 et « 1898 : the Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion? », *Journal of Asian Studies* 65–2 (2006), 307–335.

Les réformateurs radicaux qui arrivèrent au pouvoir en 1898 décrétèrent, parmi leurs premières mesures, que tous les temples du pays devaient être confisqués pour être transformés en écoles. Même si ce gouvernement fut rapidement renversé et discrédité, l'idée de transformer de force les temples en écoles fit dès lors son chemin ; elle fut appliquée par de nombreux activistes, et approuvée par l'État en 1904. Des campagnes sur ce thème, affirmant qu'une telle transformation faisait d'une pierre deux coups (créer des écoles sans déboursier d'argent, et détruire la superstition), continueront à être menées jusque dans les années 1930. Aujourd'hui encore, en ville comme à la campagne, de nombreuses écoles sont installées dans d'anciens temples dont il ne reste plus que les murs et le souvenir dans la mémoire des anciens.

À la même époque fut importée d'Occident — via le Japon — une conception tout à fait nouvelle de la religion et de la politique religieuse. Le terme sino-japonais de *zongjiao* (*shūkyō*), qui traduit la notion occidentale de « religion » conçue comme système de croyances et de pratiques organisé et séparé de la société, s'imposa dans l'usage en 1901, et ce en même temps que son contraire, *mixin* (*meishin*), « superstition », qui était aussi un néologisme japonais importé. C'est sur ces notions étrangères que se fonda la politique religieuse de la République proclamée en 1912 : la liberté de croyance et d'organisation fut reconnue aux religions, mais très vite une liste de cinq religions autorisées fut adoptée ; elle reste encore la même aujourd'hui : catholicisme, protestantisme, islam, bouddhisme, taoïsme. Tout ce qui était étranger à ces cinq religions fut considéré comme superstition condamnable. C'est ainsi qu'en ce début de xx<sup>e</sup> siècle des activistes politiques au pouvoir, ou bien présents au sein de partis ou d'organisations estudiantines, militèrent pour la suppression des superstitions qui, selon eux, empêchaient la société chinoise d'accéder à la science, à la liberté et à la modernité. Dès les années 1905–1910, et de plus en plus par la suite, ces activistes organisèrent des tournées pour saccager les temples et en détruire le contenu, ou les confisquer pour en faire des écoles, des postes de police ou d'autres institutions modernes.

L'arrivée au pouvoir du parti nationaliste Guomindang, par la conquête militaire de la majeure partie de la Chine (1927–1928), provoqua une vague sans précédent de campagnes anti-superstition. Mais, si une minorité des cadres du parti avait penché pour une interdiction de toute religion, ayant notamment participé aux campagnes étudiantes anti-religion de 1922 et 1924 (surtout tournées vers l'anti-christianisme, accusé de collusion avec l'impérialisme), beaucoup d'autres cadres appartenaient eux à une religion, notamment le protestantisme (Sun Yat-sen et Chiang Kai-shek étaient tous deux baptisés), le bouddhisme ou l'islam. La ligne qui l'emporta fut donc la collaboration avec les cinq religions constituées, invitées à s'organiser de façon hiérarchique et, éventuellement, à participer à l'anti-superstition. En revanche, les campagnes de réforme des mœurs qui se succédèrent sur le terrain continuèrent à pratiquer activement l'iconoclasme et la confiscation à l'encontre des temples qui n'étaient pas protégés par les associations bouddhiques et taoïstes. La même confusion régna sur le plan législatif : une loi sur la gestion des temples en décembre 1929, préparée par le ministère de l'Intérieur, tenta de calmer le jeu en gérant la situation existante, mais d'autres organes du gouvernement continuèrent à appeler aux confiscations. Jusqu'en 1937, confiscations, procès et conflits se succédèrent partout en Chine.<sup>28</sup> La guerre avec le Japon (1937–1945) provoquera aussi de nombreuses destructions.

La situation dont hérita la République populaire en 1949 n'avait donc plus grand chose à voir avec celle de 1900 ; les monastères taoïstes et bouddhiques résistaient, mais la plus grande partie des temples et des associations pieuses qui les animaient avait été supprimée ou ruinée, et seuls les mouvements sectaires étaient alors en mesure d'encadrer les populations. Le régime communiste continua la politique nationaliste de liberté limitée pour les cinq religions reconnues, contrôlées au travers des associations nationales. Il procéda en outre à la nationalisation de tous les biens religieux et à la fonc-

---

<sup>28</sup> Rebecca A. Nedostup, *Religion, Superstition, and Governing Society in Nationalist China*, Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2001.



tionnarisation du clergé. Ce dernier n'eut donc plus aucune autonomie, et se trouva décimé par les campagnes d'épuration politique qui se succédèrent. Lors de la révolution culturelle (1966–1976), la destruction massive de tous les édifices religieux fut proclamée et seuls quelques grands monastères historiques furent protégés par l'armée.

Le vandalisme officiel en Chine ne prit fin qu'en 1976, pour laisser place à une nouvelle politique religieuse, très prudemment ouverte, et sur les mêmes bases distinguant religion et superstition. Depuis, dans les villages, les communautés rurales reconstruisent leurs temples en ruines. Ce faisant, elles restent souvent aux limites de la légalité.

## *2. Le vandalisme d'État en Extrême-Orient : quelques pistes de réflexion théorique*

Le vandalisme : une praxis d'État parmi d'autres

Le phénomène historique de la destruction des lieux de culte par les pouvoirs publics chinois et japonais renvoie donc à une gamme extrêmement large de pratiques, variant dans leurs motivations, leur ampleur, leurs modalités et leurs effets. Il est néanmoins important pour l'historien de considérer ensemble tous ces actes de vandalisme, au-delà des formes diverses qu'ils empruntent. D'une part, en effet, il existe d'évidents recoupements et continuités entre les différents types de destruction — par exemple une destruction de temple peut être motivée à la fois par l'immoralité de son desservant et par le caractère hétérodoxe de sa religion. D'autre part, les diverses catégories de vandalisme constituent toutes, au même titre, une modalité d'action particulière des appareils d'État, soit un mode d'intervention dont un État dispose pour s'imposer. Autrement dit, dans nombre de cas historiques (grande proscription dans la Chine des années 840, destructions de temples bouddhiques opérées au <sup>xvi</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle par les trois hégémons japonais . . .), le vandalisme n'est pas une dérive, un pis-aller ou un accident ; il n'est pas arbitraire (même si le choix concret des lieux détruits ménage

souvent une large part à diverses contingences) ; mais il constitue une véritable *praxis* d'État, choisie parmi d'autres options tactiques pour contrôler le religieux : mise en place d'un corpus législatif concernant les institutions et pratiques religieuses, (re)composition des corps ecclésiastiques, propagande et éducation (anti-)religieuses, promotion de cultes officiels. Ainsi compris, le vandalisme n'est donc pas toujours synonyme d'intolérance religieuse ou d'anticléricalisme. C'est un moyen d'arriver à ses fins politiques, perçu comme efficace dans un contexte donné.

Bien entendu, par rapport à d'autres modalités d'intervention, le vandalisme repose presque toujours sur la contrainte (même lorsqu'une reconstruction immédiate du lieu de culte détruit est prévue par les autorités), et assez souvent même sur la brutalité (lorsqu'on chasse ou élimine physiquement les desservants des bâtiments). C'est que, à l'origine de l'acte de vandalisme, il peut y avoir l'idée que les projets politiques, idéologiques et sociaux du pouvoir officiel sont supérieurs aux intérêts des institutions religieuses concernées : pour un État sûr de son droit, il ne saurait y avoir de lieux de culte qui feraient obstacle à l'application de ses projets et de sa volonté. Bien entendu, en tant qu'acte de violence, le vandalisme n'a rien qui puisse étonner l'historien, car l'État est par définition violence. Dans ce sens, le vandalisme est seulement révélateur du rapport de force existant entre l'État et les institutions religieuses.

Le vandalisme, en tant que manifestation de la capacité de l'État à pouvoir exercer une violence, est fondamentalement équivoque : révèle-t-il la force sûre d'elle-même ou, au contraire, la faiblesse, la crainte face à un adversaire redouté ? Une observation des différents cas de vandalisme au cours des histoires chinoise et japonaise fait en effet apparaître ces deux visages de Janus du vandalisme. Par exemple, les hégémons japonais détruisant les temples des puissantes Églises bouddhiques du xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle (Jôdo Shinshû, Tendaishû, Shingonshû, etc.) faisaient montre tout autant de leur faiblesse face à elles que de leur autorité. Ou bien encore, en s'attaquant aux institutions bouddhiques et à celles des autres religions

« étrangères » (mazdéisme, manichéisme, nestorianisme), l'État des Tang avouait ses appréhensions face à des Églises influentes, tout en montrant aux yeux de tous sa capacité à imposer sa volonté : la confiscation et la destruction partielle de plusieurs dizaines de milliers d'établissements ainsi que la sécularisation de près d'un demi-million de personnes au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle constituent une étonnante démonstration de force.

Mais la destruction de « temples immoraux » chinois peut aussi se comprendre comme l'aveu de l'incapacité de l'État à faire respecter ses lois concernant l'interdiction de certains cultes. Dans cette ambiguïté-là, nous sommes au cœur même de toute démonstration de violence : une épreuve de force est toujours un risque pour l'offenseur. Ceci explique la prudence du magistrat chinois nouvellement affecté qui n'ose que rarement vandaliser les « temples immoraux » des localités où il prend son poste, parce qu'il craint que sa position ne soit trop faible par rapport aux autochtones. Ceci explique également que, somme toute, ce mode d'intervention constitua un fait assez rare dans l'histoire de la Chine, et plus encore dans celle du Japon. En tout cas, la manifestation la plus claire de la fragilité des mesures de vandalisme est que, en Chine comme au Japon, les lieux de culte détruits ressurgissent assez souvent, et rapidement. Par exemple, on ne peut qu'être frappé, dans le cas des « temples immoraux » de Chine, par la vitesse à laquelle les établissements détruits par les magistrats zélateurs réapparaissent dès que les fonctionnaires sont mutés ailleurs. Ainsi, il est quelquefois arrivé sur le Continent qu'un même temple puisse être détruit une dizaine de fois en deux ou trois siècles et, au bout du compte, continue de se dresser, toujours bien là, même si la reconstruction a pu éventuellement engendrer quelques modifications du culte de façon à ce que le nouveau temple soit plus acceptable.

Chine/Japon : une chronologie contrastée, un zèle inégal

L'historien qui porte un regard sur la longue durée du vandalisme extrême-oriental ne peut que constater les différences chronologiques

existant entre Chine et Japon. Nous avons vu en effet qu'en Chine l'État impérial a détruit très tôt, de façon récurrente et sur une très longue durée, des lieux de culte non autorisés, jugés hétérodoxes ou immoraux. Les destructions d'édifices religieux jugés « immoraux » (*yinsi*) ont débuté dès la période des Han ; en ce qui concerne le bouddhisme, la première des « catastrophes de la Loi » qu'énumèrent les historiographes du bouddhisme chinois remonte à l'année 445, les deuxième et troisième « catastrophes » datant, on l'a vu, respectivement des années 570 et 840. En aval de l'histoire chinoise du vandalisme d'État, les derniers épisodes sont liés aux campagnes « anti-superstition » commençant en 1898 et aboutissant à la Révolution culturelle (1966–1976). Or, au Japon, les violences religieuses d'État se sont inscrites dans une chronologie à la fois plus tardive et moins longue, puisqu'elles se sont produites sur « seulement » quatre cent ans, du *xvi*<sup>e</sup> au *xix*<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ici, dans l'Archipel, trois moments furent particulièrement importants : le dernier tiers du *xvi*<sup>e</sup> siècle, les années 1660, puis la période 1840–1870. Aussi, on pourrait dire que, d'une certaine façon, au cours de l'histoire, l'État nippon se montra moins vandale que son homologue chinois. Cette différence pourrait tenir au fait que l'histoire des rapports de force entre appareils d'État et institutions religieuses ne fut pas du tout la même en Chine et au Japon.

En effet, le sentiment de danger constitue l'une des motivations les plus sensibles d'un État vandale ; or, de ce point de vue, force est de constater que les appareils d'État chinois et japonais n'ont pas été confrontés aux mêmes moments, aux mêmes menaces (réelles ou supposées), dans leurs relations avec les institutions religieuses. Ainsi, le développement de puissantes religions constituées, c'est-à-dire organisées autour d'établissements nombreux, richement dotées et pourvues d'un clergé aux effectifs importants, fut beaucoup plus précoce en Chine qu'au Japon. Par conséquent ces institutions religieuses représentèrent objectivement en Chine, bien plus tôt qu'au Japon, un risque pour la souveraineté de l'État. Ce fut d'ailleurs surtout le cas des institutions bouddhiques qui, par

leur puissance temporelle, occupèrent pendant longtemps une position dominante dans l'histoire politico-religieuse des deux pays. Sur le Continent, dès le iv<sup>e</sup> siècle de notre ère, le clergé bouddhique s'enrichit de dons divers (terres, métaux précieux...) et bénéficia d'un certain nombre de privilèges (exemptions de taxes et de corvées). Sa richesse, son organisation et sa volonté d'autonomie alimentèrent tout au long de la période s'étendant entre le v<sup>e</sup> et le ix<sup>e</sup> siècle les critiques selon lesquelles l'Église bouddhique formait un État dans l'État. En revanche, en ce qui concerne le Japon, il faut attendre quelques siècles supplémentaires pour que le bouddhisme soit réellement rayonnant et dominateur : l'introduction officielle de cette religion ne date que de la deuxième moitié du vi<sup>e</sup> siècle (538 ou 552) et, pendant longtemps, ses temples et ses moines furent assez peu nombreux dans l'Archipel. À côté des quelques temples déjà construits dans la région centrale (Nara), le tout premier réseau de « temples provinciaux » (*kokubun-ji*) ne fut instauré que dans les années 740 (sur le modèle chinois).

Cependant, la multiplication tardive des temples bouddhiques sur le territoire japonais ne peut expliquer à elle seule le fait que les dirigeants nippons soient restés pendant longtemps beaucoup plus timides que leurs homologues continentaux en matière de vandalisme. En effet, il faut sans doute aussi expliquer ce manque de zèle vandale par une histoire idéologique différente, où les heurts mettant aux prises les appareils d'État et les diverses Églises ont peut-être été moins forts dans l'Archipel que sur le Continent. Ici, il faut rappeler que, depuis le vi<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'État japonais (dans sa forme impériale, puis dans sa forme militaire) a toujours cru trouver dans le bouddhisme et ses cérémonies un soutien religieux pour gouverner,<sup>29</sup> et ce sans discontinuité jusqu'à l'époque de Meiji, et sans

---

<sup>29</sup> Par exemple, le gouvernement des shōguns du clan Ashikaga (1338–1573) a créé le réseau des « temples des provinces en paix » (*ankoku-ji*) et perfectionné celui des temples zen des « Cinq Montagnes » (*gozan*) qui avait été mis en place par le shōgunat précédent de Kamakura (1192–1333).

que les institutions et les membres du clergé bouddhique soient mis en concurrence, comme ils le furent en Chine, avec une classe de lettrés et un clergé taoïste rivaux. Même dans le Japon des Tokugawa (xvii<sup>e</sup>–xix<sup>e</sup> siècles), où les dirigeants se sont appuyés sur l'idéologie confucianiste et ont à l'occasion repris les diatribes des samouraïs-lettrés à l'encontre du bouddhisme, les institutions bouddhiques ont toujours été épargnées, en partie d'ailleurs parce qu'elles participaient activement au contrôle de la population (via le système de rattachement obligatoire des roturiers à un temple local). Il est vrai également qu'à cette époque les Églises bouddhiques japonaises avaient perdu toute leur morgue des temps médiévaux : en entrant dans l'époque moderne, leur richesse foncière et leur force militaire avaient fondu comme neige au soleil. Les temples n'étaient plus un danger. Par là, ces institutions bouddhiques se retrouvaient dans la même position de soumission et de coopération face à l'État que le clergé et les grands sanctuaires shintô. Précisons à ce propos que, de l'Antiquité jusqu'à Meiji, l'importance symbolique du shintô « national », c'est-à-dire sa prééminence dans les institutions et l'imaginaire officiels (l'empereur du Japon est le descendant de la grande divinité solaire Amaterasu Ōmikami), fut toujours inversement proportionnelle à l'importance que son clergé et ses sanctuaires ont eu sur le plan économique et politique. Dans l'histoire du Japon, le shintô institutionnel n'a jamais représenté un danger qui puisse susciter une réaction vandale.

Outre le haut degré de coopération ou de fusion entre les institutions étatiques et les religions constituées, il y a d'autres raisons qui expliquent que l'État japonais ait été globalement moins vandale que l'État chinois. En effet, il faut rappeler qu'il n'acquiesce une véritable assurance qu'assez tardivement et que pendant longtemps il ne fut pas en mesure de réagir contre des établissements religieux bouddhiques puissants, enrichis par nombre de dons et de privilèges. Une chose est d'avoir de bonnes raisons de prendre des mesures de destruction de lieux de culte et de réorganisation du clergé, une autre est de pouvoir le faire. Autrement dit, tandis que

l'application des mesures des Tang lors de la troisième « catastrophe » révèle la puissance de l'appareil d'État chinois de l'époque (tout autant que ses appétits économiques), il faut croire que, pendant l'Antiquité japonaise (794–1192), une telle force a manqué aux appareils d'État dirigés par l'empereur et l'aristocratie de Heian (Kyôto). Et pourtant, pendant cette période, l'empereur et les aristocrates de la cité impériale pouvaient constater chaque jour que, avec la loi de 743 permettant la privatisation des nouvelles terres défrichées, et par la suite avec la « remise » de nombre de terres d'État aux classes dominantes des régions centrales, les grands établissements bouddhiques se constituaient de vastes domaines privés (*shôen*) qui remettaient ouvertement en question le principe — emprunté à la Chine — de la nationalisation des terres.

On sait que l'État impérial nippon a tenté à plusieurs reprises d'enrayer ce mouvement de « shôenisation » qui affaiblissait ses fondements fonciers et fiscaux. Mais, ses efforts furent vains. Dès le <sup>x</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle, soit au moment même où se confirme la seconde vague de shôenisation de l'Archipel, le pouvoir politique effectif de la Cour impériale s'affaiblit irrémédiablement : les taxes provinciales rentrent difficilement et les provinces s'organisent de plus en plus de façon indépendante. Signe de cette décadence, les aristocrates de la Cour se retrouvent quotidiennement menacés par les fameux « moines-soldats » (*sôhei*) des grands temples de la région entourant la cité impériale (Enryaku-ji, Kôfuku-ji, etc.). Comment aurait-on pu, dans ces conditions, imposer la destruction de lieux de culte, la confiscation de leurs biens et la laïcisation de leurs desservants ? En revanche, on ne peut que constater que les destructions importantes de temples bouddhiques apparaissent dans l'histoire du Japon dès que les dirigeants sentirent, à juste titre, qu'ils étaient assez forts pour imposer une réorganisation du paysage religieux. Ainsi, en fut-il des destructions des généraux Oda et Toyotomi et, plus tard, au <sup>xvii</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle, de celles d'un Tokugawa Mitsukuni ou d'un Ikeda Mitsumasa : tous ces actes nouveaux de vandalisme s'inscrivaient *de facto* dans le processus de la formation d'un État

moderne japonais, c'est-à-dire d'un État puissant par les moyens administratifs dont il disposait (et il faut rappeler ici que le système de la « féodalité centralisée » des Tokugawa fut remarquablement efficace dès le <sup>xvii</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle), mais aussi d'un État désireux de s'approprier de nouveaux domaines de compétence, en l'occurrence le religieux (mise en place de rapports hiérarchiques entre les temples, divinisation du fondateur de la dynastie, etc.).

Dans ce sens, le vandalisme d'État peut être aussi un indicateur de ce que l'on pourrait appeler un certain niveau de sophistication et d'efficacité des appareils bureaucratiques. De fait, la destruction massive des lieux de culte comme la réorganisation du clergé qui souvent l'accompagna ont parfois été l'occasion dans la Chine et le Japon anciens d'un déploiement impressionnant de moyens administratifs. Ainsi, en Chine, les destructions de l'empereur Wuzong des années 844–845 et, au Japon, celles du seigneur Tokugawa Mitsukuni dans les années 1660 ont été remarquablement bien préparées par des recensements sur les biens et le personnel des établissements religieux ciblés. Tandis que l'empereur Chinois chargeait son Bureau des Cultes d'établir des statistiques sur les religieux et leurs richesses (monnaie, grain, esclaves, etc.), le seigneur Japonais ordonnait aux villages et fonctionnaires de son fief d'inscrire sur des registres toutes sortes d'informations sur les desservants et les établissements présents dans le domaine de Mito (histoire, revenus, nombre de fidèles . . .) ; il veillait aussi à ce que chaque démolition soit motivée par une raison très précise.<sup>30</sup>

Ce travail d'inventaire se retrouve dans la Chine contemporaine.<sup>31</sup> De fait, les premiers recensements complets de tous les temples chinois furent provoqués par la loi du 2 octobre 1928, qui elle-même visa à clarifier la situation des biens religieux confisqués par l'État nationaliste et faisant l'objet d'innombrables conflits et

---

<sup>30</sup> Nathalie Kouamé, *Le Sabre et l'Encens* . . . , op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> En Chine, ces inventaires furent à la base des politiques du patrimoine. Sur celles-ci, voir Zhang Liang, *La naissance du concept de patrimoine en Chine, <sup>xix</sup><sup>e</sup>–<sup>xx</sup><sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris: Recherches/lpraus 2003. Les lois sur les temples de la



procès. Là encore, inventaire, confiscation et destruction systématiques des lieux de culte furent l'expression de la construction d'un État moderne, avec cette fois-ci une administration présente dans tous les quartiers et villages. Ceci explique que contrairement aux destructions ponctuelles de « temples immoraux » opérées jusqu'au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et souvent suivies de reconstructions, les destructions causées par les campagnes anti-superstition du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle furent généralement définitives. On était devenu beaucoup plus efficace.

Tout ceci montre combien le vandalisme n'est pas nécessairement une réaction sauvage et incontrôlée à une situation religieuse donnée. Les vandales aussi peuvent être très policés.

Le vandalisme et le problème de la sacralité des lieux saints

Les lieux saints faisant par définition l'objet de rituels d'installation, de purification et de consécration,<sup>32</sup> et constituant des espaces où se déroulent des activités cultuelles (prière, divination, sacrifice, prêche . . .), il est impossible de les détruire sans remettre en question leur nature toute particulière, c'est-à-dire leur sacralité. Ainsi, on ne s'étonnera pas du fait que de nombreux récits chinois racontent que les dieux et les saints maltraités et chassés de leur temple veulent se venger. Toute l'hagiographie des fondamentalistes confucianistes chinois ressasse le thème des villageois apeurés, craignant la vengeance du dieu dont le temple est détruit par le magistrat — une vengeance qui ne vient pas et prouve par son absence le bien-fondé de la destruction. On trouve également sur le Continent beaucoup d'histoires de magistrats vandales hantés, voire

---

Chine nationaliste prévoient une protection contre la confiscation des édifices religieux particulièrement anciens ou prestigieux.

<sup>32</sup> Sur la consécration en Chine, voir Michel Strickmann, *Mantras et mandarins: Le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine*, Paris: Gallimard 1996, 165–211. Sur les règlements des temples chinois qui interdisent les activités qui profaneraient le lieu sacré, voir Vincent Goossaert, « La gestion des temples chinois au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle : droit coutumier ou laisser-faire? », *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 23 (2001) 9–25.

tués, par des dieux vengeurs, une menace suffisamment prise au sérieux pour que nombre de ces fonctionnaires prennent des précautions rituelles avant la destruction effective.<sup>33</sup> En effet, lorsque le temple est détruit sans que la divinité soit réinstallée ailleurs, celle-ci continue de hanter les lieux saccagés. C'est ainsi qu'aujourd'hui on voit fréquemment des Chinois venir brûler de l'encens sur un tas de ruines ou aux portes d'une école ou d'une prison qui furent jadis un temple.

Cela étant, malgré les appréhensions ou les peurs générées par certains actes de vandalisme, il arrive qu'en Chine et au Japon les coups portés aux édifices religieux n'aient pas toujours la même gravité que dans l'Occident chrétien où beaucoup d'édifices saints (églises, chapelles . . .) sont considérés comme des « maisons de Dieu » définitivement sacralisées par l'acte liturgique de la dédicace, et devant rester inviolables (d'où le fameux droit d'asile). Autrement dit, en Chine et au Japon, on peut envisager très sereinement, et très respectueusement, de déménager ou de reconstruire des bâtiments religieux, — c'est-à-dire, en fait, de les détruire. La coutume de détruire-reconstruire les grands sanctuaires shintô du Japon est une bonne illustration de ce trait religieux extrême-oriental. Le cas des sanctuaires impériaux d'Ise est assez bien connu. Véritable institution d'État qui a survécu aux vicissitudes de l'histoire (la première occurrence daterait de la fin du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle, la dernière eut lieu en 1993), le rituel de destruction-reconstruction se répète à Ise tous les vingt ans depuis des siècles. La tradition veut que, chaque fois, ce soit tout ensemble les bâtiments, les portiques (*torii*) et les palissades constituant les sanctuaires à proprement

---

<sup>33</sup> Sur les combats entre fonctionnaires et dieux locaux, voir Jean Lévi, « Les fonctionnaires et le divin : luttes de pouvoirs entre divinités et administrateurs dans les contes des Six dynasties et des Tang », *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 2 (1986) 81–110 et Judith M. Boltz, « Not by the Seal of Office Alone: New Weapons in Battles with the Supernatural », dans Patricia B. Ebrey et Peter N. Gregory, éd., *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 1993, 241–305.

parler, mais aussi les costumes et les instruments rituels attachés au culte qui sont entièrement détruits, pour être reconstruits ou refabriqués, chaque étape du processus étant marquée par l'accomplissement de rites très précis. (De nos jours, cependant, certains objets ou certaines parties des bâtiments sont conservés.) Il est extrêmement intéressant de noter que l'opération va jusqu'à « effacer » le lieu saint où se produit la destruction. Concrètement, dans le sanctuaire le plus important d'Ise, soit le Sanctuaire Intérieur où est vénéré le *kami* Amaterasu, ancêtre présumé de la famille impériale, les nouveaux bâtiments sont toujours élevés sur un terrain limitrophe de taille identique, si bien que, dans les années ordinaires, l'enceinte globale juxtapose un espace « plein » de sacralité, rempli des bâtiments saints, à un espace « vide » de sacré, qui attend d'être occupé par les futurs nouveaux édifices. C'est au moment du « transfert » rituel (*sengû*) de la divinité et de son « corps » (en l'occurrence un miroir) vers les nouveaux bâtiments que la charge de sacralité passe d'un espace à l'autre. De multiples théories ont été avancées pour expliquer cette coutume de la destruction-reconstruction des sanctuaires d'Ise ou d'ailleurs (Sumiyoshi, Kasuga, Izumo, Usa . . .). Certains insistent sur le caractère périssable du bois traditionnellement utilisé dans la construction des édifices. D'autres pensent que la destruction-reconstruction constituait à l'origine une sorte de compromis entre la coutume ancienne de ne pas bâtir de sanctuaire permanent et la nécessité (politique) nouvelle d'affermir certains cultes importants ; cette idée a été avancée pour Ise par l'ethnologue Miyamoto Tsune.ichi.<sup>34</sup> En tout cas, quelle que soit l'interprétation adoptée, il est clair que, dans le cas des sanctuaires shintô du Japon, la destruction peut s'avérer être la condition essentielle de la permanence du lieu saint. Ici, raser un édifice sacré est un acte vital, parce que régénérateur.

Mais, la portée destructrice d'un acte vandale peut être relative dans d'autres cas encore. En effet, en Extrême-Orient, comme

---

<sup>34</sup> Miyamoto Tsune.ichi, *Ise Sangû*, Tôkyô : Yasaka Shobô 1995 (1<sup>ère</sup> édition : 1987), 39-46.

ailleurs, la sacralité d'un lieu saint ne réside pas seulement dans le sol ou les murs, ou dans l'espace délimité par le sol et les murs. Ce qui, dans un temple bouddhique, est le plus chargé de sacralité, est plutôt le support de la divinité, soit la statue la représentant ou un autre objet de dévotion. En Chine, le brûle-encens sur lequel est inscrit le nom de la communauté est considéré comme plus sacré que le bâtiment qui l'abrite ; si l'icône et le brûle-encens sont déplacés et réinstallés ailleurs, l'ancien lieu n'a plus ou presque plus de présence divine.<sup>35</sup> Au Japon, il est possible de reconstituer entièrement un circuit pèlerin composé de différents temples dans une toute autre région que celle du pèlerinage originel simplement parce qu'on considère qu'il suffit de trouver les idoles (*honzon*) idoines (il peut s'agir de mottes de terre rapportées des temples du circuit d'origine) pour recréer le parcours sacré ; on accordera à ce nouveau pèlerinage la même efficacité religieuse qu'au pèlerinage qui a servi de modèle.<sup>36</sup> Cette importance de l'objet de dévotion explique que, quand il y a vandalisme, l'atteinte portée est moins radicale, moins violente qu'on pourrait le supposer *a priori*. Par exemple, des sources attestent que, lorsque le seigneur japonais Ikeda Mitsumasa a procédé à une réforme religieuse du fief d'Okayama dans les années 1660, les idoles des temples bouddhiques détruits n'ont pas nécessairement disparu dans la tourmente, mais ont été récupérées par les bonzes défroqués des temples détruits, ou par d'autres temples laissés en place, ou bien encore par des communautés villageoises ; ces idoles ont ainsi continué à être l'objet de

---

<sup>35</sup> Notons que certains spécialistes ont même cru déceler dans la culture chinoise un manque d'attachement au lieu physique, aux bâtiments, l'identité culturelle se fixant selon eux sur une idée désincarnée du lieu de mémoire. Voir par exemple Simon Leys, *L'humeur, l'honneur, l'horreur*, Paris : Robert Laffont 1991, 11–18.

<sup>36</sup> On trouvera dans l'ouvrage suivant de nombreux exemples de ces « pèlerinages d'imitation » qui constituent un aspect important de la tradition pèlerine japonaise: Shinno Toshikazu (dir.), *Kôza Nihon no junrei : 3, Junrei no kôzô to chihô junrei*, Tôkyô : Yûzankaku 1996.

la vénération populaire.<sup>37</sup> De même, dans la Chine traditionnelle, quand un magistrat supprimait un temple « immoral », sectaire, ou lieu de débauche, il conservait et remettait à une institution orthodoxe les statues des saints confucianistes, bouddhistes ou taoïstes pour ne détruire que celles dont le culte était interdit. Force est d'admettre que, dans ces cas-là, comme dans tous les autres où il y a déménagement des bâtiments de culte au préalable détruits et/ou regroupement dans un même lieu de ces sanctuaires, l'acte de vandalisme n'est que superficiel, puisque le sacré n'est que partiellement, ou provisoirement, touché.

Mais, il est des formes radicales de vandalisme. Ainsi, en Chine, alors que l'activité de destruction de « temples immoraux » avait déjà plus de deux mille ans d'histoire, un véritable iconoclasme fondé sur le rejet du principe même du culte des icônes vit le jour à l'extrême fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. C'est ainsi qu'à l'époque contemporaine les activistes de l'anti-superstition, de même que des chrétiens, ont été responsables d'un vandalisme « aveugle » qui n'opérait aucune distinction : toute forme de culte d'une statue leur paraissait infâme. La première application à grande échelle de ce vandalisme radical fut le royaume céleste des Taiping, d'inspiration chrétienne, sous lequel temples et statues furent systématiquement détruits.<sup>38</sup>

En outre, la Chine comme le Japon ont aussi connu une forme de vandalisme particulièrement destructrice, parce qu'agissant tant matériellement que symboliquement, qui a consisté à détourner les lieux et les objets saints de leurs fonctions religieuses premières. Sur le Continent, il est arrivé que les fondamentalistes confucianistes confisquent des « temples immoraux » ou des monastères bouddhiques pour y abriter leurs saints et leurs écoles.<sup>39</sup> Et lorsque le

---

<sup>37</sup> Tamamuro Fumio, *Nihon bukyô shi, Kinsei*, Tôkyô : Yoshikawa Kôbunkan 1987, 131–166.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*, Seattle : University of Washington Press 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Schneewind, « Competing Institutions : Community Schools and 'Improper Shrines' in Sixteenth Century China », *Late Imperial China* 20(1) (1999) 85–106.

christianisme y fut proscrit en 1724 (parce qu'il était assimilé à une secte), on proposa tout naturellement de transformer les églises en temples de Mazu, l'une des grandes saintes populaires reconnues par le rituel d'État. Au Japon, on a pu voir des seigneurs soucieux de modernité (et de shintoïsme) fondre les cloches cultuelles des temples pour en faire des canons. Ce fut par exemple le cas du neuvième *daimyô* du fief de Mito, Nariaki, un des chantres de la militarisation du Japon dans la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ne sont-ce pas là des façons absolument radicales de détruire un espace ou un objet à vocation religieuse ? Dans la France révolutionnaire, les partisans de la déchristianisation ne s'y étaient d'ailleurs pas trompés, qui avaient eux-mêmes tenté de transformer les églises chrétiennes en « temples de la Raison ».

23, rue H. Rochefort  
75017 Paris  
France  
Nathalie.Kouame@inalco.fr

NATHALIE KOUAMÉ

GSRL, 59–61, rue Pouchet  
75849 Paris Cedex 17  
France  
vincegoo2000@yahoo.com

VINCENT GOOSSAERT

## BOOK REVIEWS

MAX CHARLESWORTH, FRANÇOISE DUSSART, AND HOWARD MORPHY (eds.),  
*Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings* — Alderhot: Ashgate Publishing Company 2005 (xii + 324 p.)  
ISBN 0 7546 5128 2 (hb.)

The scholarly approach to Australian Aboriginal religions has changed significantly since the forerunner of this anthology was published in 1984. A sign of this change is the new title of the 2005 edition. The 1984 edition was called *Religion in Aboriginal Australia: An Anthology*. The editors of the new edition opted for *Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings*, because “we can no longer speak of Aboriginal religions *en bloc* but rather of Aboriginal religions in the plural.” Plurality is a vital characteristic of this anthology. It is demonstrated by showing that for various Australian aboriginal people “the religious factor” differs considerably. The book offers, among others, articles on “women’s business,” on Yolgnu art, on the painter Emily Ngwarray, on creation stories of the Ngarinyin people, and on the life and land of the Yarallin people. In addition to this, the book contains a plurality of stances toward Aboriginal religions. The editors — a philosopher of religion and two anthropologists — selected mainly articles from anthropologists, but the list of authors also includes a linguist and artist, a Catholic priest who is lawyer by training, and a spokesman for the Ngarinyin people.

Plurality is also found in the themes that are treated successively: “Revaluations,” “Religious Business,” “Sacred Places,” “Art and Religion,” “Different Dreamings,” “Religions and Law,” and “Religious Exchanges.” The result is an interesting panorama on the multiformity, complexity and development of Aboriginal religions. Practices such as the ritual activity of “big businesswomen,” the creating of art, the telling of creation stories, and claims on land are all described as part of Aboriginal religion. But it is underlined that these practices are not only religious: “sacred” and “secular” aspects are merging in different complex ways. Telling stories is part of a “political project,” painting is also art, and in land claims secret,

“sacred,” and anthropological knowledge is used for political causes. In this way, the book sheds an interesting light on the fluid character of the “sacred” and the “secular.”

The first part of the book is a useful overture. The topic is the work of evolutionist and functionalist scholars such as Baldwin Spencer, Sidney Hartland, Emile Durkheim, W.E.H. Stanner, and other “classic” anthropologists. Their opinions differed on whether Australian Aboriginals were religious or practicing magic. Some claimed that Australian Aboriginals had not evolved from the magical into the religious phase. In contrast, the scholars who considered religion a *sui generis* phenomenon asserted that Aboriginals’ beliefs and practices should count as religion. Both assumptions depended primarily on a presupposed definition of religion, not on ethnographic information. While this part of the book assesses outdated approaches, it is more than a critical analysis of these. It can — and should — be read as a warning: behind every analysis of Australian Aboriginal religion might loom romantic, essentialist, or primitivist motives.

A case in point is Deborah Bird Rose’s article on “Life and Land in Aboriginal Australia.” She takes an outspoken essentialist position by making a sharp contrast between “the Christian religion” and “the Yarallin view.” Her “own Western-educated angle” makes it difficult to understand the Yarrallin cosmos, she claims. According to her, the mother earth-view of the Yarallin people can be equated with Lovelock’s Gaia-hypothesis, for the Yarallin people understand the “living system” of the earth “scientifically, through observations and hypotheses developed and tested through time.” Her use of the disputed theory of Lovelock is only one of the signs of her too uncritical and too romantic account of “the Yarallin view.”

But her article is an exception. One of the strong points of the book is the subtlety of most contributions. The majority of articles show that the consecrating of places, art, or stories is the creative and strategic work of imaginative cultural and religious entrepreneurs — without presenting them as “invented traditions” or “deliberate fabrications.” A very compelling example of such a tactful analysis is Robert Tonkinson’s article on the Hindmarsh Bridge affair. In this case, a group of Ngarrindjeri women resisted the building of a bridge. They claimed that the Hindmarsh Island was sacred for their secret women’s tradition while their opponents accused them of fabricating this tradition. Tonkinson illustrates the tensions between the idea of a fixed and unchanging Aboriginal tradition and



the innovative dynamic practices of Aboriginal people. Innovation of tradition is not the same as invention of tradition, he argues persuasively. Tradition, although presented as authentic and longstanding, should be seen as a resource which is innovatively used. This does not make a tradition inauthentic: innovations are intrinsic to Aboriginal religious life.

Another asset of the book is the relevance of the subject. Debates and scholarly opinions on Aboriginal religions have political implications and applications. The Hindmarsh Bridge affair divided the Ngarrindjeri people and has led to a “rancorous public debate” between anthropologists and related professionals. By offering insight into the complex Australian debates on authenticity and change of religions and traditions, this anthology addresses several important large scholarly and political issues at the same time.

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies  
University of Groningen  
Oude Boteringestraat 38  
9712 GK Groningen  
The Netherlands  
j.w.boekhoven@rug.nl

JEROEN BOEKHOVEN

DANIEL STÖKL BEN EZRA, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* — Tübingen: WUNT 163, 2003 (445 p.) ISBN 3–16–148092–9. € 94.00.

This revised version of a doctoral thesis directed by Guy Stroumsa, with the assistance of David Satran and John Gager, and accepted in 2002 by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem deals with the most important festival of Judaism in late antiquity, viz. Yom Kippur — the day of atonement — and its impact on early Christian thought and ritual. Stökl ben Ezra’s researches cover a wide field. Beginning with Old Testament and Early Jewish texts concerning Yom Kippur, he seeks to show the influence of Yom Kippur on early Christianity from the first to the fifth century C.E., drawing on Judaistic, New Testament and patristic studies. The advantage of taking such a long chronological perspective on the topic of research is that it gives us an investigation of *longue durée* into Yom Kippur. The importance

of this approach was emphasized in particular by the Annales School (which is not explicitly mentioned by Stökl ben Ezra).

In his fourteen-page introduction, Stökl ben Ezra formulates as the central thesis of his book “that Christian atonement theology and its festal calendar not only emerged under the influence of Yom Kippur [. . .] but also continued to develop in light of the ongoing challenge that the contemporary Yom Kippur posed to Christians” (p. 2). Methodologically, Stökl ben Ezra distinguishes (1) different types of influences from one religion to another (two modes — apostolic and biblical — referring specifically only to Christianity and Judaism, and three modes — adoption, compulsion, and reaction — referring to the influence of any religion on another); (2) rites and rituals as “repeated behaviour” where the rites are a subordinate category of ritual (“ritual is composed of several rites,” p. 6); and (3) myths (as narratives with foundational status for a collective) and mythology as the ensemble of the myths of one particular collective. The reception of the term *imaginaire*, coined in French historiographic research (Annales School) is very well done. Stökl ben Ezra defines this as “the collective repertoire of motifs of a certain collective [. . .]” — the *langue* is reconstructed partly on the basis of the *paroles*. Here, he is in fact an heir to the fundamental linguistic distinctions made by de Saussure.

After a ten-page introduction, the book is divided into three major parts:

1) The first part treats Yom Kippur in Early Jewish thought and ritual. After a brief presentation of its names (1), its rituals (2) and *imaginaires* (3) in the Second Temple and the rabbinic periods are presented in greater detail. In the case of the rituals, (2) Stökl ben Ezra distinguishes between Yom Kippur rituals performed in the Temple (where his discussion focuses especially on Mishna Yoma) and those outside the Temple (at home, in the community, or in the synagogue), with a focus on Yom Kippur prayers at Qumran, in Philo and rabbinic sources, and with a special consideration of the Seder Avodah, which is a complete verbal reenactment with liturgical rubrics (p. 59). The spread of the kapparot-rite *against* the objections of great halakhic authorities (p. 67) shows the psychological importance of the ritual killing of an animal for purposes of atonement.

With regard to the images of Yom Kippur (3), he discusses apocalyptic texts including Qumran, Greek Diaspora texts (LXX, Philo, and 4 Macc),

with a brief reference to Christian Jewish texts, rabbinic texts, and the Hekhalot literature. In this chapter 3 we find passages of particular interest, e.g. about the scapegoat, often interpreted as an embodiment of the evil forces of sin (Az'azel as the demonic source of sin, 1 Enoch 10; as chief of the demons, Apc Abraham) which are to be conquered by the eschatological leader of the good forces, who can be described in high-priestly imagery (11QMelchizedek, see pp. 100f); and about the use made of the high priest's entrance to the holy of holies at Yom Kippur in some apocalyptic sources (1 Enoch 14; TestLev), and in Philo and the Hekhalot literature for the ascent of the mystic. This shows an individualization of the imagery.

2) The second part treats the impact of Yom Kippur on early Christianity in the first and second centuries. Unlike most scholars who have investigated this subject, Stökl ben Ezra also examines extra-canonical texts such as the Epistle of Barnabas (pp. 147ff) and the Gospel of Peter (pp. 161ff). When he discusses the Christian *imaginaires* of the *scapegoat*, Stökl ben Ezra looks at the Epistle of Barnabas, Mt 27,15–23 and — with some question marks — at Gal 3, John 1,29 and 1 Pt 2,24.

After his analysis of Barnabas and its proto-typology, Stökl ben Ezra debates J.D. Crossan's thesis that the scapegoat ritual influenced all the canonical passion narratives via what he calls the "Cross gospel". Unlike Crossan, Stökl ben Ezra concludes that the Yom Kippur typology of Barnabas is not the *root*, but one of the branches of the canonical Passion narratives (pp. 161–165). As for the Matthean version of the Barabbas episode (Mt 27,15–23), Stökl ben Ezra interprets Matthew's redactional changes against the background of the lottery of the two goats in the Yom Kippur ritual. The evangelist thus expresses the theological idea that in this scene, the people usurp the role of God on Yom Kippur, and finally choose the wrong goat, viz. Barabbas, who represents the Messiah as the *people* want him to be, in contrast to Jesus, who represents the Messiah as *God* wants him to be (pp. 170f). However, the problems posed by the Barabbas episode (which is already narrated in Mark, the source of Matthew) and the lack of evidence for the *privilegium paschale* outside the Gospels remain unexplained. For the early Christian *imaginaire* of the central celebrant of the Yom Kippur sacrifice — the *high priest* — Stökl ben Ezra turns to the Epistle to the Hebrews. He interprets the development of the high-priestly Christology of this Epistle as deriving from apocalyptic

conceptions of Yom Kippur, where the high priest ascends to the presence of God in the heavenly holy of holies and a cosmological battle is fought against the leaders of the evil powers.

After speaking of Christ as high priest, Stökl ben Ezra discusses the Christian *imaginaire* of Christ as *kapporet* (Rom 3,25–26) and Christ as *atonement* in 1 John. Much more briefly, he presents the Yom Kippur imagery in Gnosticism and early Christian mysticism (ch. 5) and in Jewish Christian legends (ch. 6).

3) The third part presents the significant impact of Yom Kippur on early Christianity from the third to the fifth centuries. In the course of this period, Stökl ben Ezra notes an increasing use of Yom Kippur imagery by Christians, thanks not only to “bookish,” “biblical” influences on the church fathers from Leviticus, Hebrews and Romans, but also to the continuing praxis of Yom Kippur by their Jewish contemporaries. There were even Christians who participated in the fast: this attractiveness of Yom Kippur to Christians provoked polemic reactions by Christian theologians such as Origen and Chrysostom, who held that this was contrary to Christ’s once-and-for-all atoning death. The competition between Christians and Jews on the issue of atonement provoked both Christian polemics against the “contemporary Yom Kippur” and Jewish anti-Christian polemics against the all-atoning power of the cross. Finally, Stökl ben Ezra interprets the emergence of at least three Christian autumn festivals (the Encaenia/Exaltation of the cross in Jerusalem; the Fast of the seventh month/the Ember Day of September in Rome; and the commemoration in the East of Gabriel’s annunciation to Zechariah) as Christian responses to the continuing attractiveness of Yom Kippur, which was celebrated in autumn each year.

Stökl ben Ezra concludes that the competition between early Christianity and early Judaism generated a mutual influence. The “dangerous ones in between” — Christians who continued to observe Yom Kippur, and Jews who felt a special affinity to Jesus — stood at the very heart of this competition (p. 333).

The sheer breadth of Stökl ben Ezra’s field of research entails the obvious consequence of restrictions in depth and in the discussion of individual issues. Despite this, the author provides an impressively detailed discussion of the secondary literature. His bibliography is abundant and the indexes are very useful. His book is a precious mine of information

about the mutual influences of Judaism and Christianity. The publication of this work is an important and promising step. I hope that it will encourage other scholars to pursue further investigations into this field.

Universität Augsburg

PETRA VON GEMÜNDEN

Lehrstuhl für Evangelische Theologie

Philosophisch-Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät

Universitätsstraße 10

86135 Augsburg

Germany

petra.vongemuenden@phil.uni-augsburg.de

RENÉ GOTHÓNI (ed.), *How to do Comparative Religion? Three Ways, Many Goals* (Religion and Reason 44) Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter 2005 (x + 221 p.) ISBN 3-11-018572-5 (cloth). € 68.00/\$ 91.80.

Members of the Department of Comparative Religion at the University of Helsinki variously represent the three theoretical approaches to the study of religion that are generally characteristic of those in the field itself: the phenomenological/hermeneutical, the explanatory, and that of critical theory. More venturesome than scholars in the larger field, however, those in the Helsinki faculty organized an international workshop on the comparative study of religion in 2002 to which a leading proponent of these three approaches was invited. Professor Douglas Allen (University of Maine) was the selection of those employing the phenomenological/hermeneutical approach to understanding religions, Professor Donald Wiebe (University of Toronto) was the choice of those interested in pursuing explanatory theories of religion, and Professor Rita M. Gross (University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire) was the preference of those engaged in critical theory. The presentations of these representative scholars (subsequently edited by them for publication) are each introduced by their theoretical counterparts from Helsinki, by René Gothóni, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Tuula Sakaranaho respectively, and are followed by responses to these approaches, both critical and appreciative, from the faculty of comparative religion at Helsinki. Finally, each section concludes with a reply to these responses by the invited speaker.

In his summary of the “major contributions of philosophical phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics to the contemporary study of religion”, Allen rightly distinguishes between the rigorous claims of philosophical phenomenology and the descriptive, “irreducibly religious” projects of the phenomenologists of religion (8). Although his conventional defense of a phenomenology of religion is often overly jargonistic and, at times, ambiguous, Allen concludes, interestingly, that phenomenological approaches will benefit from “the contributions of economic, psychological, historical, and cognitive scientific explanations” (27). In a departure from traditional phenomenologists of religion, he even concedes that there “must be intersubjective criteria for testing the explanatory value of the phenomenological constructions” (18), which, like all scholarly approaches, will be, at some level at least, reductionistic (27, 53).

Wiebe argues, on the other hand, that the unrealized intent of the nineteenth-century’s founders of the study of religion as an academic field was not descriptive phenomenology but a scientific understanding of religion (65). If such a study is ever to be achieved, he concludes, explanations for “religious meaning” must be offered rather than the “edifying practices” (130) and “extra-scientific forms of explanation” (133) by which he characterizes phenomenological understandings and hermeneutical interpretations. Wiebe proposes that the cognitive sciences currently offer the most promising possibility for scientific explanations of religion. Although the representatives of the phenomenological and hermeneutical approach argue that their approach is no less “scientific” than is the explanatory (e.g., the contributions by René Guethóni and Nils Holm), they nevertheless conclude inexplicably that the latter is “incompatible” with their own while, at the same time, viewing the representatives of the explanatory approach as “dogmatic and exclusive” (3).

Gross argues that methodology can function as either a “tool or [a] trap”. She illustrates her point from the discrimination that she encountered as one of the first women to pursue graduate education and, subsequently, employment in the study of religion and how this personal history shaped her and others’ adoption of critical theory as a corrective to traditional theorizing in the field. Unfortunately — in Gross’ view (187) — responses to her intended critique of method as social construction focused more on her illustration of the problem than on the problem itself. This shift in focus from methodological critique to social situation

exemplifies Kimmo Ketola's observation that methodological alternatives derived from other than testable theories can easily become as ideological as the approaches they are intended to correct (176).

The volume concludes with a Summary by Kari Mikko Vesala and Heikki Pesonen that reviews the major issues raised and debated during the workshop: science vs religion (or scientific vs non-scientific explanation; naturalistic knowledge vs existential or religious edification; explanation vs interpretation; reductionism vs non-reductionism) — and the relationship of these debates to continuing international discussions of theory that have been held in Finland since the 1950s (also Gothóni, v–vi). Whereas Vesala and Pesonen (following Veikko Anttonen, 93–97), frame their summary with the indisputable observation that all “sciences and academic fields are social and cultural institutions”, it must nevertheless be asked whether it follows that the conclusions of scientific method and academic inquiry must necessarily succumb to the “social nature of human actors” (194).

The three approaches considered at the Helsinki workshop were clearly and fairly presented, they were vigorously defended by their practitioners, and the respondents, which included, in addition to those mentioned above, Elisa Heinämäki, Teemu Taira, Teuvo Laitila, Tuula Sakaranaho Tom Sjöblom, and Terhi Utrainen, were constructive even when critical. Still something of the forthright debate between representatives of the different approaches is discernable in the edited proceedings and, predictably, no rapprochement was achieved. Gothóni, the volume's editor, concludes of the workshop that “the center of the conflict is not really a difference about methodic considerations, but rather about the kind of knowledge we aim to obtain through our scientific procedure” (3). However, questions nevertheless remain about whether “methodic considerations” really do make no difference for our studies and about which criteria establishes any method as “scientific procedure”. The volume resulting from this latest engagement of such questioning makes for lively and instructive reading and makes a genuine contribution to ongoing discussions of such issues.

Department of Religion  
The University of Vermont  
Burlington, Vermont 05405, USA  
lhmartin@uvm.edu

LUTHER H. MARTIN

GUY G. STROUMSA, *La fin du sacrifice. Les mutations religieuses de l'Antiquité tardive*, avec une préface de John Scheid, Collège de France, Odile Jacob, Paris, 2005 (213 p.) ISBN 2-7381-1634-5.

Dans ce livre de la collection du Collège de France, Guy G. Stroumsa (S.) publie les quatre conférences qu'il a tenues dans ce même lieu comme professeur invité dans le cadre de l'enseignement de John Scheid *Religions, Institutions et Société de la Rome antique* en février 2004. L'auteur même le dit, ce livre ne se veut pas une œuvre adressée exclusivement à des spécialistes (p. 18). Les quatre conférences ont été publiées presque telles qu'elles avaient été prononcées. (L'article en appendice « Du maître de sagesse au maître spirituel », déjà paru dans G. Filoramo (éd.), *Maestro e discepolo. Temi e problemi della direzione spirituale tra 6° secolo a.C. e 7° secolo d.C.*, Brescia 2002, 13–24 a été republié comme enrichissement de l'argumentation générale du livre). Dans les notes en bas de page, il ne faut pas s'attendre à trouver une bibliographie complète du sujet : ces notes sont plutôt conçues comme appui à la lecture et encadrement de la recherche. L'auteur renonce d'ailleurs à donner une bibliographie à la fin de l'ouvrage. Son intention est claire. Il n'a pas voulu perfectionner le manuscrit, en donnant la priorité à la parution rapide : un choix courageux qui satisfait les auditeurs du Collège de France, mais aussi la curiosité et l'envie de partager la connaissance de tous ceux qui auraient voulu écouter ces conférences.

Mais ce n'est là que le plus petit défi que S. relève. En fait, il y en a un bien plus grand : le choix de traiter un sujet très vaste et très complexe dans un livre de seulement 200 pages.

La question qui travaille S. est fondamentale pour tous les historiens des religions : comment et pourquoi le christianisme s'est-il imposé pendant l'antiquité tardive (une période qui pour l'auteur commence déjà au 2<sup>e</sup> s. ap. J.-C.). Mais S. refuse de donner une réponse simple et certaine. Il préfère montrer, à travers quatre argumentations, comment la sensibilité envers le religieux se modifie entre le 2<sup>e</sup> s. et le 4<sup>e</sup> s.

Dans le premier chapitre. « Un nouveau souci de soi », S. discute de comment se diffuse, à ce moment de l'histoire, une nouvelle façon d'envisager la perception de soi. Dès le début, l'auteur annonce clairement son intention de mettre en relief l'influence du judaïsme dans la sensibilité religieuse du christianisme émergent. La perception de soi qu'ont les



chrétiens ne peut se comprendre que si l'on tient compte d'un concept fondamental, propre aussi au judaïsme, à savoir la croyance dans la résurrection du corps. Ce concept ne doit pas être confondu avec l'idée propre à la philosophie grecque et romaine de l'immortalité de l'âme. Le corps, qui n'avait pas beaucoup d'importance pour les philosophes, devient un élément fondamental dans l'optique chrétienne: l'individu qui se pense, se pense comme âme, mais aussi comme un corps de pêcheur qu'il faut purifier. L'auteur parle d'un « élargissement du moi ». Parmi beaucoup d'autres considérations intéressantes, une en particulier nous a frappé. S. remarque une différence d'attitude envers la mort (46) : le chrétien ne l'accepte pas et ne peut la penser que s'il considère en même temps la résurrection du corps et de l'âme ; le sage (qui représente le philosophe « païen ») l'accepte parce que son idéal est de vivre selon les lois de la nature. Il y a un changement profond de mentalité en passant de la religion traditionnelle au christianisme : pour les non chrétiens, il y a l'idée d'une élite de sages se distinguant des autres parce qu'ayant plus de connaissance et sachant mettre à profit les enseignements moraux appris des autres sages ; pour les chrétiens, par contre, l'idée d'élite repose sur le concept de vertu : ce sont les plus vertueux qui peuvent aspirer à une vie meilleure après la mort.

Avec le deuxième chapitre « L'essor des religions du livre », S. analyse le concept de « religion du livre ». Nous opposons les religions basées sur un écrit considéré comme sacré à celles qui se fondent sur une transmission orale du savoir. S. nous fait remarquer justement que cette distinction a été établie a posteriori : les chrétiens eux-mêmes ne se définissaient pas comme pratiquant une religion du livre. Cette expression commence à prendre forme seulement dans le Coran. S. fait remarquer que l'écriture a une importance fondamentale pour les juifs à partir du premier exil : le texte sacré écrit remplace l'idée de patrie. Pourtant, pendant l'Antiquité tardive, les juifs remettent l'accent sur l'oralité : le texte sacré est unique, tous les commentaires et exégèses doivent se faire oralement, parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas avoir le même statut que les textes à interpréter. Le parcours du judaïsme est donc inverse à celui d'autres courants religieux, comme le zoroastrisme, le bouddhisme et justement le christianisme, qui au moment de l'Antiquité tardive mettent par écrit leurs doctrines. Dans ce chapitre, S. souligne également avec un regard anthropologique l'importance des transformations dans la façon d'écrire et de lire : le support de l'écriture passe du rouleau au codex ; cela permet une diffusion plus

importante du texte écrit ; la lecture par conséquence se fait aussi en privé et en silence. Tout cela est évidemment fondamental pour la diffusion d'une religion comme le christianisme, dans laquelle le livre sacré occupe une place de premier plan. Ce chapitre se conclut avec des réflexions très intéressantes sur la traduction de la Bible. L'idée du savoir chrétien est très 'démocratique' : elle vise à rejoindre le plus grand nombre de personnes. Pour cela, évidemment, le texte sacré a du être traduit en plusieurs langues. Cette idée même de traduction implique que dans la conscience des chrétiens il n'y avait pas un lien indissoluble entre le texte en question et une « tradition ethnique ou culturelle » (98). La situation est différente de celle des religions qui continuent à lire leurs textes sacrés exclusivement dans la langue originelle. Cette ouverture envers les langues et les traductions est un présupposé qui permet de comprendre pourquoi les chrétiens n'ont pas rejeté la culture gréco-latine, mais ont au contraire essayé de l'intégrer. Le chapitre se clôt sur une comparaison fascinante : la mythologie et l'idée de bibliothèque subissent à cette époque la même transformation. Elles se simplifient et s'organisent autour d'un seul mythe voir d'un seul livre (le mythe chrétien et la Bible). Tout le reste a exclusivement la fonction d'aider à mieux comprendre le message de cet enseignement fondamental. « La lecture est devenue intensive, plutôt qu'extensive ».

Le troisième chapitre « Transformation du rituel » porte sur le passage du sacrifice sanglant, propre aux religions du monde gréco-romain, au sacrifice symbolique, caractéristique de la religion chrétienne. Pour S. la suppression des sacrifices sanglants opérée par Constantin représente une vraie révolution. La perception de ce rite subit une évolution : le rituel sacrificiel « se transforme d'une alliance entre la communauté et ses dieux en la préparation d'une expérience mystique » (108). Selon S., même pour ceux qui sont profondément convaincus de l'utilité des sacrifices sanglants, ces rites deviennent importants non pas comme lien d'une collectivité, comme ils l'étaient auparavant, mais comme instruments de transformation de l'identité personnelle.

Arrêtons-nous un instant sur cette idée. Le fait de voir une évolution dans la sensibilité envers le sacrifice a été formulé, *mutatis mutandis*, aussi par R. Turcan dans son étude incontournable sur le sacrifice de Mithra (« Le sacrifice mithriaque: innovations de sens et de modalités », dans J. Rudhardt, O. Reverdin, *Le sacrifice dans l'Antiquité. Entretiens*

sur l'Antiquité classique 27. Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1980, 343–358.). Turcan désigne lui aussi un cheminement du sacrifice païen, dans lequel les hommes immolent un animal pour les dieux, au sacrifice chrétien, dans lequel le dieu en personne se sacrifie pour les hommes. Pour Turcan, il y a une étape intermédiaire : les rites de Mithra, dans lesquels le dieu (au lieu des hommes) immole un animal pour le salut des hommes. Cette idée d'évolution dans la sensibilité des anciens, soulevée par Turcan et reprise de façon différente par S., ne cesse de nous poser des problèmes. Certes, nous affirmons aujourd'hui que le sacrifice était pour les Romains de l'époque républicaine un instrument de « conservation de l'identité collective ». Mais cela veut-il dire que le sacrifice aux époques les plus anciennes n'avait pas eu une dimension plus « spirituelle »? J'aimerais beaucoup que cette question soit approfondie un jour, non pas du point de vue de l'Antiquité tardive (sur cet aspect cf. aussi Nicole Belayche, « “Partager la table des dieux”. L'empereur Julien et les sacrifices », *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 218, 2001, 455–486 et son article dans S. Georgoudi, R. Koch Piettre, Fr. Schmidt (éd.), *La Cuisine et l'autel. Les sacrifices en questions dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne*, Actes de la Table ronde, 24–26 juin 2001, Coll. EPHE, Section des Sciences religieuses, Brépols, Turnhout, à paraître), mais plutôt en ce qui concerne l'époque archaïque. Ceci n'est pas du tout un reproche à l'auteur du livre que nous sommes en train d'analyser, mais plutôt une tentative de démasquer une *communis opinio* mal fondée selon laquelle la religion romaine traditionnelle devrait être considérée comme un ritualisme rigide et froid incapable de susciter des émotions. Les spécialistes de la religion romaine archaïque et classique (groupe dans lequel j'aimerais m'inclure) devront y réfléchir.

Dans le cadre de cette enquête sur le rite, S. souligne justement l'importance de la destruction du temple de Jérusalem. Ce fait a pour conséquence une « spiritualisation de la liturgie » (p. 116 et cf. aussi p. 117 pour l'explication très prudente du sens que l'auteur donne justement au mot spiritualisation dans ce contexte) : le sacrifice réel est remplacé par la prière. Ce fait crée un élément important sur lequel la conscience des chrétiens peut se greffer. Avec une formule très suggestive, S. affirme que pour les chrétiens « le rite s'est transformé en récit du rite ». La différence entre les juifs et les chrétiens est que les premiers ont transformé la pratique sacrificielle en créant une religion non sacrificielle, les seconds par contre ont créé une religion centrée sur le sacrifice, mais sur un sacrifice

« réinterprété » (129). Une autre idée fondamentale de ce chapitre est la comparaison du martyr avec le sacrifice humain. Ce rapprochement est d'autant plus pertinent qu'il est déjà évoqué par les auteurs de l'Antiquité (133), mais les considérations de S. ne se limitent pas à cela. L'auteur fait aussi allusion au « kamikazes » de nos jours (une réalité à laquelle malheureusement nous sommes tous confrontés, l'auteur en premier lieu, qui est professeur à Jérusalem).

Enfin le quatrième chapitre « De la religion civique à la religion communautaire » traite du changement dans l'organisation des communautés de fidèles. Les temples romains, à l'exception des lieux de culte de Mithra (*mithrea*), étaient généralement de grands édifices devant lesquels pouvait se rassembler un grand nombre de personnes, rendant un culte à une divinité qui y habitait. Les chrétiens, organisés en petites communautés, pratiquent leur culte non pas devant, mais à l'intérieur d'un édifice. Ici encore l'auteur indique comme antécédent les synagogues juives. Les petites églises s'adaptent bien au caractère du christianisme primitif qui est une *religio illicita* et a le statut d'un culte privé. Ensuite, quand il devient la religion officielle de l'Empire, il récupère « le statut et le rôle étatique qui étaient ceux de la religion civique de la Rome païenne ». Cependant le christianisme reste toujours une religion qui se base sur la conversion, la décision personnelle et la foi (159). En citant le livre de Dodds (*Païens et Chrétiens dans un âge d'angoisse*), S. affirme que les chrétiens sont cependant incapables de comprendre l'idée de religion civique. Cette idée leur est étrangère comme celle de « vérité religieuse » l'est pour les païens (175). Plus avant (179), S. reprend cette conception : pour le chrétien l'idée de religion est identique à celle de vérité, tandis que pour Varron ces deux concepts s'opposent. Contrairement aux passages des auteurs chrétiens indiqués en note, S. ne donne pas la référence du passage de Varron, auquel il se réfère pour cette affirmation : c'est dommage car la lecture de Varron est tellement difficile qu'il serait précieux de relire ce texte en réfléchissant sur cette interprétation.

A partir de la p. 182 S. tire les conclusions de ses quatre interventions. Il a voulu montrer que les mutations anthropologiques, culturelles et politiques de l'Antiquité tardive se comprennent mieux si on prend en compte le changement radical subi par le concept même de religion. Les différents chapitres ont montré comment les juifs ont expérimenté ces mutations

avant les autres. Leur religion, qui est à la fois conservatrice et innovatrice, se présente comme un « fossile vivant ».

La dernière page (186) revient sur la question initiale: le christianisme est-il le « porteur » ou le « créateur » de ces mutations? La réponse de S. est que cette religion, grâce à son héritage juif, a su « inventer des nouveaux cadres, dans lesquels la religion se redéfinirait ».

Il faut donc comprendre que pour S. le christianisme est le résultat d'une nouvelle sensibilité religieuse, qui s'élabore sur le patrimoine religieux juif et qui s'instaure dans un monde occidental prédisposé à l'accueillir. S. définit le christianisme comme une « religion orientale [...] à la conquête de l'Europe » (31). On aurait peut-être aimé que l'auteur s'arrête plus longtemps sur ses conclusions, pour profiter davantage de sa vue d'ensemble. Ce livre nous aide à refouler, une fois pour toute, la tentation d'utiliser des expressions trop faciles comme « la victoire du christianisme dans l'Empire romain » (30) et nous oblige à ne pas oublier l'importance de l'héritage juif dans le christianisme émergent, au moins dans les domaines dans lesquels S. nous montre une continuité voir une opposition consciente des deux courants religieux.

Si nous pouvons nous permettre une critique, celle-ci concerne le titre qui constitue une *pars pro toto*. Le thème des sacrifices en fait ne représente qu'un quart de la matière du livre. Le sous-titre nous semble beaucoup plus en accord avec le contenu.

Faculté des Lettres  
Uni Bastions  
Rue de la Candolle 3  
1211 Genève  
Switzerland  
fprescendi@bluewin.ch

FRANCESCA PRESCENDI

*Du corps humain, au carrefour de plusieurs savoirs en Inde: Mélanges offerts à Arion Roşu par ses collègues et ses amis à l'occasion de son 80e anniversaire / The Human Body, at the Crossroads of Multiple Indian Ways of Knowing: Papers Presented to Arion Roşu by his Colleagues and Friends on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, Eugen Ciurtin (ed.) — Bucarest, Paris: Studia Asiatica vol. 4–5 (2003–2004) (832 p., ill.) ISSN 1582–9111.

This is literally a “massive” volume. The bilingual parallel title prepares the reader for an international collection of papers: 22 articles in French, 16 in English, 1 in Italian, 39 altogether, plus introductions by Colette Caillat, Priya Vrat Sharma and the editor Eugen Ciurtin, a bibliography of Roşu’s publications and a *tabula gratulatoria*. The abstracts in English and French alone cover 24 pages and even if restricted to one language an only approximately adequate summary of what each paper has to say would exceed the limits of a brief review, while a discussion of selected individual contributions will reflect above all the reviewer’s preferences and limitations and perhaps too little of the editor’s intentions.

The title of this collection might indicate a programmatic focus proposed to the invited contributors — and a worthy and stimulating focus it would have been. But the number of contributions which do not refer to the general title as well as the lack of such reference in some of the section titles which group the articles forces the reader to conclude that the title was found *post festum*. Except for the editor and of course A. Roşu himself, only reviewers will probably have read through the whole volume. The scope of titles and topics is intimidatingly vast and yet a beautiful reflection of the scope of Roşu’s own interests and the width of the impulses and influences to which his friends and colleagues testify.

The papers are grouped in six sections:

I. Plantes (articles by Suzanne Amigues, André Couture, Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat, Samia Al Azharia Jahn, Georges-Jean Pinault)

II. Médecine et alchimie (Willem B. Bollée, Eugen Ciurtin, Pierre Delaveau, Vijaya Deshpande, Jinadasa Liyanaratne, G. Jan Meulenbeld, Sandra Smets, B.V. Subbharayappa, Gyula Wojtilla, Dominik Wujastyk, Fancis Zimmermann)

III. Littératures et savoirs (Nalini Balbir, Lyne Bansat-Boudon, Gérard Colas, Irma Piovano, S.R. Sarma)

IV. Histoire des religions en Asie du Sud (M.L. Gharote, Jacqueline Filliozat, Minoru Hara, Siegfried Lienhard, Boris Oguibénine, André Padoux, Charlotte Schmid, David Gordon White)

V. Philosophies indiennes (Henk W. Bodewitz, George Chemparathy, Jean Naudou, Amalia Pezzali)

VI. L'Inde, au-delà de l'Inde (Kamaleswar Bhattacharya, Klaus Karttunen, Jean-Marie Lafont, Roland Lardinois, Bernard Le Calloc'h, I.K. Sarma, Mihaela Timuş)

Inevitably the weight and quality of work is not as even as the editor (and the readers) might have hoped. The subject matter of some contributions is very close to what the authors have been publishing about before (and I find reprints of previously published work a hardly adequate token of respect for the originality of A. Roşu's work). While others present monographic studies, evidently the result of extended research. To supply individual papers with indexes is a practice which has unfortunately not yet found general acceptance by editors of journals and essay collections. And since there is no general index to the whole volume the reader will have to find the details of interest (e.g., quoted texts, key terms) and the cross references by himself. "The human body" is evidently a term where cross references converge as a (certainly not complete!) list of verbs applied to the body may illustrate: breathe, heal (or be ill), fight, dance, meditate, die (or become immortal), bathe, purify, act, reap (the result of acts), eat. Some of the disciplines and methods represented in this volume do not offer themselves to such first level cross referencing (literary analysis, textual history, art history, philosophy, yoga, history, epigraphy, semantics, etymology, alchemy, botany, medicine, embryology, dramaturgy, etc.).

The one common point of reference is of course the personality and the work of Arion Roşu (and one could classify the contributions also with regard to whether and how they realise this reference). Those who place their work in the history of research on their subject, who are meticulous about their bibliography, give attention to the details and show respect for the indigenous roots, historical differences and variants, as well as for the multiple contexts of language, style and terminology, those authors consciously strive to achieve the scholarly standards represented by A. Roşu who appears as a model to be respected or even revered by those who learned from him and who honour him by their own work. That this

intention does come across goes to the credit of the editor who has done the laborious job of conceptualising, formatting and editing very successfully (a few unconventional details of layout and small accidents of printing in the copy at hand notwithstanding). He has also provided the bibliography of publications by A. Roşu and important biographical information in the introductory matter.

In a recent review of a “Festschrift” (*Numen* 52.4 pp. 517–524) Michael Stausberg contextualized his remarks with regard to the characteristics of this literary genre of academic publications (quoting Kocku von Stuckrad concerning the “family relations” documented in such a book). I cannot interpret the list of contributors to the Roşu-volume in that respect nor enlarge on the “social” structures (relationship patterns) of their academic life. Yet, the Roşu “family” comes across as a group unanimously committed to methodical exactitude in all details and united by an avid interest in the concrete realities of life and culture (“body” being one such reality that provides focus). This is embedded in great veneration, admiration and gratitude for the “patriarch” of this family. The book thus becomes more than the sum of its contributions — and this is an honour worthy, indeed, of Arion Roşu.

Universität Zürich  
Abteilung für Indologie  
Rämistrasse 68  
8001 Zürich  
Switzerland  
pesch@indoger.unizh.ch

PETER SCHREINER

PETER ANTES, ARMIN W. GEERTZ AND RANDI R. WARNE (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Volume 1: Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches* (Religion and Reason 42); *Volume 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches* (Religion and Reason 43) — Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter 2004 (vi, 559 p. + vi, 497 p.) ISBN 311017698X. € 118 / € 98.

These two beautifully bound and printed volumes of some 1050 pages present themselves as follow-ups to Jacques Waardenburg’s *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion* (1973) and Frank Whaling’s



*Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion* (1984/1985), all published in the same series. The editors intend to take up the thread where Whaling left it: While the two volumes edited by Whaling covered developments from World War II to the early 1980s, *New Approaches to the Study of Religion* aims at once again bringing the agenda up to date. Compared to Whaling's volume, *New Approaches* has a higher percentage of female contributors (10 out of 36 authors). Countrywise, most contributors are from the United States (8), Denmark (6), and Canada (5). Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and South Africa provide two authors each. The remaining authors are from or work in Australia, Japan, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. (In view of the importance of these countries for the history of our discipline, it may be pointed out that there are no authors from France and Italy.)

The volumes reflect several major challenges to, and changes within, the field, which clearly emerge when comparing the set with Whaling's work. To begin with, the psychology of religions (discussed by David Wulff in the Whaling-volumes) seems to be on the retreat from the general study of religion. While psychology and psychological questions are occasionally mentioned in passing in some chapters, psychology is not discussed as an approach in its own right. This may be taken as illustrating two overlapping trends: Whereas some form of psychology (and psychoanalysis) previously was part and parcel of the general study of religion, this can no longer be taken for granted; this development went along with a professionalization of the psychology of religion in psychology departments. Sadly, there seems to be a widening gap between psychologists studying religion and scholars of religion addressing psychological issues.

Moreover, while the phenomenology of religion was still a dominant paradigm in the early 1980s (discussed jointly with historical approaches in a lengthy contribution by Ursula King), the phenomenology of religion is relegated to the margin in the present volumes. And whereas an entire chapter in the *Contemporary Approaches* was devoted to "myths and sacred texts" (by Kees Bolle), the editors apparently did not detect any new approaches to the study of myth worthy of being included. It can be taken as a sign of changing research preferences (from ideology to practice) that "performance" is featured. The larger part of the chapter by Ronald Grimes provides a critical discussion of Catherine Bell's theory, or non-theory, of ritual.

Texts, however, are still very much discussed: Vol. II (pp. 1–73) contains a section on “Textual Approaches” (the shortest section of the set) that includes a brilliant chapter on the problem of translation (by Alan Williams), the first ever systematic discussion of that crucial issue in the study of religion. Moreover, there is a rather brief chapter on “[t]he Use of Electronic Media in the Study of Sacred Texts” (by Gordon Newby) and a chapter (by Dawne McCance) on the challenges to the study of texts posed by such theorists as Lacan, Kristeva, and Derrida — unfortunately with minimal critical discussion and a rather half-hearted attempt to illustrate their usefulness for the general study of religion.

Comparison is still an important concern in the new volumes, but while Whaling’s 1984-chapter surveying “Comparative Approaches” ran into over 130 pages, the *New Approaches* devotes a mere 15 pages to them (by William Paden, insightfully responding to the criticism put forward by Jonathan Smith in his well-known essays that by now, especially in the United States, seem to have achieved an almost canonical status). Other chapters grouped in the section bearing the name “Comparative Approaches” (vol. II, pp. 77–191) include pieces on performance, syncretism (by Luther H. Martin and Anita Maria Leopold), religious dance (by Helga Barbara Gundelach), and human rights (by Rosalind I.J. Hackett). These chapters are clearly of relevance for the systematic and general study of religion, but they are not comparative per se (unless one would argue that every general issue is of a comparative nature).

The last named chapters — without doubt all good if not excellent and in part also innovative pieces of scholarship — may at the same time illustrate a certain degree of conceptual ambiguity with regard to the choice of the title of the volumes. The ‘approaches’ in question clearly oscillate between meta- and object-level: There may well be a comparative and performance-theory approach to the study of religion, dance and syncretism on the other hand are hardly ‘approaches’ to the study of religion, but rather objects of study or categories of scholarly discourse. In this respect, the title of the volumes can partly be regarded as a misnomer (and evoke wrong expectations).<sup>1</sup> To illustrate this point, *New Approaches* contains a chapter (by my esteemed colleague Lisbeth Mikaelsson) that

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Connolly (ed.), *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London, New York, 1999) follows the approach-model consistently by surveying anthropological, feminist,

critically discusses the scholarly (unbounded, analytical) *category* of gender rather than feminist *approaches* to the study of religion (which, to be sure, have deeply influenced the emergence of the category in scholarly discourse in the first place and coloured it in ways that, as Mikaelsson points out, are not unproblematic in the study of religion).

An original new approach that emerged during the early 1990s and has had a powerful take-off in the early years of the new millennium is what its promoters refer to as 'the cognitive science of religion.' An entire section of the work (vol. II, pp. 347–455) is devoted to cognitive approaches. While Justin Barrett provides a summary of major findings of the by now almost canonical (American) literature, in one of the highlights of the work Armin Geertz draws a much larger picture and powerfully makes the point that "there is more to cognitive theory than hitherto assumed in the comparative study of religion" (vol. II, p. 385). Unlike most American writers' heroic tales of the young science's achievements, the chapter by Geertz stands out in that it moves beyond the usual cross-referencing circles and raises many fundamental issues and questions. The third essay (by David Warburton) fathoms the borderland between cognitive theory and prehistoric archaeology, applied to the Near East (in particular Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia, modern Turkey).

This leads over to the question of history. A section of *New Approaches* is devoted to historical approaches (vol. I, pp. 385–519). The chapters in this section discuss religions on the Internet (Lorne Dawson), the study of the "New Fundamentalisms" (Peter Antes), of Western Esotericism (Wouter Hanegraaff) and of new religions (Jean-François Mayer). The last-mentioned chapters are exceptional in these volumes in that they focus on (mostly Western) groups of religions or religious orientations rather than on more general issues. Moreover, there is a chapter (by Jørn Borup) that, proceeding from the example of Buddhism, discusses the "blurred overlappings between Orientalism(s), inverted Orientalism(s) and Occidentalism" (vol. I, p. 482). Unfortunately, the wide range of new historical approaches to the study of history (such as micro-history, history of mentality, historical anthropology, history of concepts, discourse and science!) and their possible application and theoretical challenges to the historical study of religions are largely absent from the *New Approaches*.

---

phenomenological, philosophical, psychological, sociological, and theological approaches to the study of religion.

Sociology and the social sciences, however, are getting clearer into the picture. The respective section (vol. II, pp. 195–344) contains six chapters, including a very useful survey of some main issues (e.g., institutional deregulation, politics, youth, and globalization) as well as new concepts and theories (such as ‘implicit religion’ and rational choice theory) in the sociology of religion (by Liliane Voyé). The chapter is followed by Karel Dobbelaere’s presentation of his own theory of secularization. Two further comprehensive chapters are devoted to a reassessment of recent studies on the significance of urbanization for religious change (by Robert Kisala) — resulting in the assumption “that cities provide an environment for a contemporary religious revival” (vol. II, p. 271) — and a review of the blossoming field of studies on religion and diaspora (by Steven Vertovec) that concludes with a warning that “the rush to study diaspora” on the one hand is important in that “it challenges us to reconsider fundamental concepts such as identity and community, culture, continuity and change” while it, on the other hand, “should not lead us to obfuscate the very categories we wish to clarify” (vol. II, p. 297). The concluding remarks in the chapter on the study of religion in the media (by Alf Linderman) likewise reflect on the theoretical implications of broadening the concepts used in scholarly discourse and reminding the reader that “religion scholarship is challenged to develop further its theoretical framework and conceptual repertoire” (vol. II, p. 317). The section concludes with a chapter (nicely complementing the one on human rights) that lays open some important pathways into the rapidly developing and intricate field of the study of religion and law (Winnifred Sullivan).

The longest section which also contains the largest number of papers (7) in the work under review is entitled “Critical Approaches” (vol. I, pp. 185–381). It starts off with a chapter (by Morny Joy) surveying philosophy of religion with a special focus on Anglo-American philosophy and phenomenology cum hermeneutics resulting in a suggestion to implement several modes of critique in order to overcome the limits of much former work in that field. In the subsequent chapter, Jeppe Sinding Jensen invites scholars of religion to pay more attention to the study of meaning-making as a point of departure for theorizing about religion. In her turn, Kirsten Hastrup discusses the implications of epistemological objectification and, challenging the common insistence on ‘context’ in religious studies, suggests regarding religion itself as “a context of motivation”

(vol. I, p. 264), “a relevant analytical context for studying certain actions, beliefs, or institutions that may or may not include all and sundry at all times” (p. 265). In his review of ideological critique in the study of religion, Ivan Strenski puts forward some suggestions to insure that this approach “proceeds with more rigor than has come to be common today” (vol. I, p. 273). That includes making it more empirical, rigorous, and relevant (in that ideological critique actually ‘makes a difference’). Moreover, he goes against common misunderstandings by reminding the reader that ideological critique “does not require massive cynicism about theories” (p. 287). While Russell McCutcheon’s chapter continues his well-known and well-documented crusade against religionists, Mark Hulsether provides a somewhat lengthy (but interesting) discussion of some recent major publications and debates in the field of religion and culture (or cultural studies and religion). This section also includes the above-mentioned chapter on gender by Lisbeth Mikaelsson.

Whaling’s *Contemporary Approaches* included a chapter on “[t]he study of religion in a global context”. Under the (slightly delusive) heading “Regional Approaches” the very first section of *New Approaches* (vol. I, pp. 13–181) provides a welcome reminder that the study of religion is in many ways context-related. As Peter Antes points out in his chapter on the study of religion in Europe, this also holds true for the claim of originality and the dynamics of scholarly innovation, for “[w]hat is new in one context, may . . . not be so in another. Newness is thus context-specific, not a general standard in and of itself” (vol. I, p. 44). This point is of course amply illustrated in these volumes. In that connection, it may be pointed out that some approaches that have come to the forefront in the German context have not been included in these volumes. This includes the economics of religion<sup>2</sup> and the aesthetics of

---

<sup>2</sup> See B. Gladigow, “Religionsökonomie — Zur Einführung in eine Subdisziplin der Religionswissenschaft”, H.G. Kippenberg and B. Luchesi (eds.), *Lokale Religionsgeschichte* Marburg 1995), 253–258 and the subsequent essays on the financing and funding of religions by Chr. Auffarth, Jörg Rüpke, and Thomas Hoffmann and Günter Kehr in that volume (pp. 259–293). G. Kehr also edited a special issue of the *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 8/1 (2000) on the economics of religion. For the English speaking world one can refer to L.R. Iannacone, “Introduction

religion.<sup>3</sup> Also the geography of religion,<sup>4</sup> the ecology of religion<sup>5</sup> and the entire field of religion and nature<sup>6</sup> are conspicuous by their absence.

Apart from Antes' chapter, the regional section includes an essay (by Pratap Kumar) on the study of religion in India which, among other things, discusses possible reasons for the absence of the comparative/historical/general study of religion(s) in that country. A further chapter (by Garry Trompf) surveys the history of and the range of contributions to the study of religion in Australia and New Zealand. Randi Warne, one of the editors of these volumes, reviews important debates and institutional shifts in the study of religion in North America. The author provides some

---

to the Economics of Religion", *Journal of Economic Literature* 36 (1998) 1465–1496 and now also to G.D. Alles, "Economy", *REVER. Revista de Estudos da Religião* 5 (2005) 35–42.

<sup>3</sup> The foundational text is H. Cancik and H. Mohr, "Religionsästhetik", H. Cancik, B. Gladigow and M. Laubscher (eds), *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe. Band I: Systematischer Teil. Alphabetischer Teil: Aberglaube-Antisemitismus* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz 1988), 121–156. Some further titles were published in recent years, see S. Lanwerd, *Religionsästhetik: Studien zum Verhältnis von Symbol und Sinnlichkeit* (Würzburg 2002); S. Lanwerd (ed.), *Der Kanon und die Sinne: Religionsästhetik als akademische Disziplin* (Études Luxembourgeoises d'Histoire & de Science des Religions 2; Luxembourg 2003); J. Mohn, "Von der Religionsphänomenologie zur Religionsästhetik: Neue Wege systematischer Religionswissenschaft", *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 55 (2004) 300–309 and the other contributions to this special issue on "Ästhetik-Kunst-Religion".

<sup>4</sup> C.C. Park, *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion* (London and New York 1994); J.-F. Vincent, D. Dory and R. Verdier (eds.), *La construction religieuse du territoire* (Collection Anthropologie — Connaissance des homes; Paris 1995); J.-R. Bertrand and C. Muller (eds.), *Religions et territoires* (Paris 1999); G. Rinschede, *Religionsgeographie* (Braunschweig 1999). See also the book series *Geographia religionum* (started in 1985). In the meanwhile religious geographies of several countries have been attempted.

<sup>5</sup> See P. Gerlitz, *Mensch und Natur in den Weltreligionen: Grundlagen einer Religionsökologie* (Darmstadt, 1998); E. Meyer-Dietrich, *Nechet und Nil: ein ägyptischer Frauensarg des Mittleren Reiches aus religionsökologischer Sicht* (Historia religionum 18; Uppsala 2001).

<sup>6</sup> See now B.R. Taylor (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (2 vols.; London 2005).

interesting insights into the different academic scenarios in Canada and the United States respectively and draws attention to changes and differences in the prevailing material and political conditions of scholarly work (amongst different groups of employees and in the two countries). Two chapters touch upon the Middle East: Bülent Şenay reviews the study of religion in modern Turkey and concludes with a pleading for the ongoing need for a pluralistic theology (vol. I, p. 95), while Abdulkader Tayob draws attention to three important protagonists of recent Arab discourse about religion (which, however, is not so much about religion as a general category at all, but about religion in the sense of Islam). All these chapters highlight many relevant developments. However, this reviewer fails to understand why this selection ignores exactly those countries/regions where the three past world congresses arranged by the IAHR have taken place: Mexico/Central America, South Africa/Africa, and Japan/East Asia respectively! It could almost seem that the choice of these venues and the exposure of the international scholarly community to partly vibrant local/regional academic environments did not have any impact on the mental geography of the discipline.

The two volumes are provided with a list of contributors as well as very useful indices of names and subjects (compiled by Karl-Heinz Golzio). Both volumes of the set start with the identical introductory essay signed by all three editors, whereas the second volume carries two pages of "Conclusions" in which the editors delineate three stages in the history of the study of religion: the "formative period" (as mirrored in Waardenburg's *Classical Approaches*), the second phase (represented by Whaling's *Contemporary Approaches*) which they — to my eyes erroneously — regard to have consisted "in formulating the differences between the comparative study of religion and most other humanistic and social disciplines" (vol. II, p. 457),<sup>7</sup> and the third phase (evidenced by the set under review), the "critical phase", which the editors, in a somewhat triumphalist fashion, find to be "extracting the study of religion from the vanities and wrong turns of the past" (vol. II, p. 457). The next generation

---

<sup>7</sup> As I see it, this second phase is rather characterized by the desire of scholars of religion to connect their discipline to the wider context of the humanities and the social sciences.

of religion scholars will pronounce its verdict on this claim. Or, to quote one of the authors: “Odds are that we and our verities will look as foolish and full of ourselves to ‘them’ as those of the past look now to ‘us’” (Strenski, vol. I, p. 274). The editors state that “our discipline has become pluralistic and global” (vol. II, p. 458). However, looking at the volumes one wonders whether it has become pluralistic and global enough. Taking into account that the reference-lists in most chapters are overwhelmingly, if not exclusively monolingual — and accordingly the intellectual input that went into them often restricted — the study of religion has definitely not become sufficiently polyglot.

Two of the editors were in the period from 2000 to 2005 serving as respectively President (a most polyglot one, by the way) and General Secretary on the IAHR Executive Committee, and they deserve the gratitude of the scholarly community for using their international networks to put together these magnificent volumes. One hopes that it will not take de Gruyter 15 years (as was the case with Whaling’s *Contemporary Approaches*) to issue a paperback edition (of the entire set or parts of it) in order for the work to be accessible to a wider readership and to be used in the classroom.

Department of the History of Religions  
University of Bergen  
Øisteinsgate 3  
5007 Bergen  
Norway  
Michael.Stausberg@krr.uib.no

MICHAEL STAUSBERG



## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

### *Periodicals*

Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte, 57.1 (2005)

### *Books*

Autiero, Antonio (ed.), *Teologia nella città, teologia per la città: La dimensione secolare delle scienze teologiche. Atti del Convegno « Teologia nella città — teologia per la città. Sulla dimensione secolare delle scienze teologiche », Trento 26–26 maggio 2004*. Series: Scienze religiose. Nuova serie, 12 — Bologna, Edizioni Dehoniane, 2005, 215 p., € 19.00, ISBN 88–10–40389–4 (pbk.).

Bagchi, Amiya Kumar, Dipankar Sinha, and Barnita Bagchi (eds.), *Webs of History: Information, Communication and Technology from Early to Post-Colonial India* — New Delhi, Indian History Congress, Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, in association with Manohar, 2005, 298 p., ISBN 81–7304–613–1 (hb.).

Belz, Johannes, *Mahar, Buddhist and Dalit: Religious Conversion and Socio-Political Emancipation* — New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 309 p., ill., ISBN 81–7304–620–4 (hb.).

Boiling, Trevor, *Quietism, Dynamic Passivity, and the Void. Based on the Spiritual Guide of Miguel de Molinos* — Cambridge, James Clarke & Co, 2005, 286 p., ISBN 0 227 67980 6 (pbk.).

Chatterji, Bankimcandra, *Ānandamāṭh, or The Sacred Brotherhood*, Translated with an Introduction and Critical Apparatus by Julius J. Lipner — New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, xiii + 315 p., ISBN 0–19–517858–0 (pbk.).

Delcambre, Anne-Marie, *Inside Islam* — Milwaukee (Wisconsin), Marquette University Press, 2005, 114 p., US\$ 15.00, ISBN 0–87462–014–7 (pbk.).

Finlan, Stephen, *Problems with Atonement: The Origins of, and Controversy about, the Atonement Doctrine* — Collegeville (Minnesota),

- Liturgical Press, 2005, viii + 144 p., US\$ 15.95, ISBN 978-0-8146-5220-6 (pbk.).
- Galvagni, Lucia, *Bioetica e comitati etici*. Series: Scienze religiose. Nuova serie, 13 — Bologna, Edizioni Dehoniane, 2005, 200 p., € 13.50, ISBN 88-10-41501-9 (pbk.).
- Grewal, Reeta, and Sheena Pall (eds.), *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology, Society, Politics and Culture. Essays for Indu Banga* — New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 394 p., ISBN 81-7304-653-0 (hb.).
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J., Ruud M. Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500): The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents*. Series: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 281 — Tempe (Arizona), Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005, x + 356 p, US\$ 45.00 (£ 34.00), ISBN 0-86698-324-4 (hb.).
- Jenkins, Phillip, *Dream Catchers: How Mainstream America Discovered Native Spirituality* — New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, xii + 306 p., £ 9.99, ISBN 0-19-518910-8 (pbk.).
- Katz, Nathan, and Ellen S. Goldberg, *Kashrut, Caste and Kabbalah: The Religious Life of the Jews of Cochin* — New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 181 p., ill., ISBN 81-7304-638-7 (hb.).
- Llewellyn, J. E. (ed.), *Defining Hinduism: A Reader, Series: Critical Categories in the Study of Religion* — London, Equinox, 2005, x + 227 p., ISBN 1-904768-73-3 (pbk.).
- Lopez Jr., Donald S. (ed.), *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism, Series: Buddhism and Modernity* — Chicago (Illinois), The University of Chicago Press, 2005, 344 p., US\$ 19.00 (£ 13.50), ISBN 0-226-49315-6 (pbk.).
- Mani, Braj Ranjan, *Debrahmanising History: Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society* — New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 456 p., ISBN 81-7304-640-9 (hb.).
- Mubayi, Yaaminey, *Altar of Power: The Temple and the State in the Land of Jagannatha, Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries*. Series: Studies in Orissan Society, Culture and History, 4 — New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 262 p., ISBN 81-7304-586-0 (hb.).
- Seckel, Dietrich, *Before and Beyond the Image: Aniconic Symbolism in Buddhist Art*, English Translation by Andreas Leisinger, Edited by Helmut Brinker and John Rosenfield. Series: Supplementum, 45 —

Zürich, Artibus Asiae Publishers, Museum Rietberg, 2004, 107 p., ill., ISBN 3-907077-13-X (pbk.).

Zelliot, Eleanor, and Rohini Mokashi-Punekar (eds.), *Untouchable Saints: An Indian Phenomenon* — New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 285 p., ill., ISBN 81-7304-644-1 (hb.).

## CONTENTS

### *Articles*

Jörg RÜPKE, Triumphator and Ancestor Rituals Between Symbolic Anthropology and Magic .....	251
H.S. VERSNEL, Red (Herring?) Comments on a New Theory Concerning the Origin of the Triumph .....	290
Michael LIPKA, Notes on Pompeian Domestic Cults .....	327

### *Review Article*

Christoph UEHLINGER, Interested Companionship .....	359
---	-----

### *Book Reviews*

Jacco Dieleman, <i>Priests, Tongues, and Rites. The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)</i> (Youri VOLOKHINE) .....	385
Jonathan Roper, ed. <i>Charms and Charming in Europe</i> (David FRANKFURTER) .....	392
Einar Thomassen, <i>The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”</i> (Michael A. WILLIAMS) .....	396

<i>Publications Received</i> .....	402
------------------------------------	-----

VOL. LIII      NO. 3      2006

ISSN 0029–5973 (paper version)  
ISSN 1568–5276 (online version)

VOL. LIII, NO. 3

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE

[www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

## NUMEN

International Review for the History of Religions

### *Aims & Scope*

The official journal of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) — is one of the world's leading journals devoted to the academic study of religions. It covers the full breadth of current international scholarship in the field, featuring articles on contemporary religious phenomena as well as on historical themes, theoretical contributions besides more empirically oriented studies. In all areas of religious studies *NUMEN* publishes articles, book reviews, review articles, and survey articles.

### *Editors*

Einar Thomassen, IKRR/Religion, University of Bergen, Øisteinsgate 3, NO-5007 Bergen, Norway; E-mail: Einar.Thomassen@krr.uib.no

Gustavo Benavides, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085, USA

E-mail: gustavo.benavides@villanova.edu

### *Book Review Editor*

Maya Burger, Département interfacultaire histoire et de sciences des religions, Anthropole, Université de Lausanne, Faculté de Théologie, BFSH2, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland; E-mail: maya.burger@unil.ch

### *Editorial Board*

R.I.J. Hackett (Knoxville, TN, USA); G. ter Haar (The Hague, The Netherlands); A. Tsukimoto (Tokyo, Japan); T. Jensen (Odense, Denmark); I.S. Gilhus (Bergen, Norway); G.L. Lease (Santa Cruz, CA, USA); P. Kumar (Durban, South Africa); A.H. Khan (Toronto, Canada); B. Boeking (London, UK); F. Diez de Velasco (Tenerife, Spain); M. Joy (Calgary, Canada); A.T. Wasim (Yogyakarta, Indonesia).

### *Honorary life members of the IAHR*

P. Antes (Hannover); M. Araki (Tsukuba); J.O. Awolalu (Ibadan); L. Bäckman (Stockholm); C. Colpe (Berlin); Kong Fan (Beijing); G.S. Gasparro (Messina); Y. González Torres (Mexico City); Å. Hultkrantz (Stockholm); G.C. Oosthuizen (Durban); M. Pye (Marburg); J.R. Ries (Louvain-la-Neuve); K. Rudolph (Marburg); N. Tamaru (Tokyo); J. Waardenburg (Lausanne); R.J.Z. Werblowsky (Jerusalem).

### *Notes for Contributors*

Please refer to the fourth page of the Volume prelims.

*NUMEN* ISSN 0029-5973 (print ISSN 1568-5276, online) is published 4 times a year by Brill Academic Publishers, Plantijnstraat 2, 2321 JC Leiden, The Netherlands, tel. +31 (0)71 5353500, fax +31 (0)71 5317532.

### *Abstracting & Indexing*

*NUMEN* is indexed in *Anthropological Index Online*, *Current Contents*, *MLA International Bibliography of Books and Articles on Modern Languages and Literatures*, *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, *Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works*, *Religions & Theological Abstracts*, *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, and the IAHR bibliographical journal *Science of Religion, Abstracts and Index of Recent Articles*.

### *Subscription rates*

The subscription price for the print edition plus online access of Volume 53 (2006, 4 issues) is EUR 213/USD 266 [for institutions and EUR 70/USD 88 for individuals]. For institutional customers, it is also possible to subscribe to online only access at EUR 192/USD 239. All prices are exclusive of VAT (not applicable outside the EU) but inclusive of shipping & handling. Please check our website at [www.brill.nl/nu](http://www.brill.nl/nu).

Subscriptions to this journal are accepted for complete volumes only and take effect with the first issue of the year.

### *Claims*

Claims for missing issues will be met, free of charge, if made within three months of dispatch for European customers and five months for customers outside Europe.

### *Online access*

For details on how to gain online access, please refer to the last page of this issue, or check [www.brill.nl/nu](http://www.brill.nl/nu).

### *Subscription orders, payments, claims and customer service*

Brill Academic Publishers, c/o Turpin Distribution, Stratton Business Park, Pegasus Drive, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8TQ, United Kingdom, tel. +44 (0)1767 604954, fax +44 (0)1767 601640, e-mail [brill@turpin-distribution.com](mailto:brill@turpin-distribution.com).

### *Back volumes*

Back volumes of the last two years are available from Brill Academic Publishers. Please contact our customer service as indicated above.

For back volumes or issues older than 2 years, please contact Periodicals Service Company (PSC), 11 Main Street, Germantown, NY 12526, USA. E-mail [psc@periodicals.com](mailto:psc@periodicals.com) or visit PSC's web site [www.periodicals.com](http://www.periodicals.com).

### © 2006 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Hotei Publishing, IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publishers.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by the publisher provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

Printed in the Netherlands (on acid-free paper).

Visit our web site at [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

# TRIUMPHATOR AND ANCESTOR RITUALS BETWEEN SYMBOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND MAGIC<sup>1</sup>

JÖRG RÜPKE

## *Summary*

This article argues that the Roman triumph with the figure of the triumphator and the burial of Roman nobles with the *pompa imaginum* should be interpreted within the framework of the prestige and practices related to honorific statues. Using the red colour of the triumphator's skin as the main argument, the figure of the triumphator is interpreted as a temporary statue, and the triumph as an attempt on part of the senate to regulate the prestige of honorific statues by tying it to a public ritual. Likewise, the bearers of *imagines* are interpreted as representing the ensemble of all legitimate — i.e. as based on public positions — statues used to construct a family. Both rituals, as known from late republican sources, developed from the fourth century BC onwards.

## 1. *Symbolic Communication*

Two rituals of the Roman republic have recently become the subject of intense research: the triumph; and the public funeral granted to Roman magistrates, with its mask-wearing actors, its impersonated ancestors, and its speeches of praise and commemoration.

---

<sup>1</sup> For discussions of the ideas in this paper, which have much furthered their development, I should like to thank in particular Ingo Gildenhard (London), Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp (Köln), Martin Jehne (Dresden), Susan Stephens, Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel (Stanford), Frances Hickson Hahn (Santa Barbara), Cecilia Ames (Córdoba), Tanja Itgenshorst (Bielefeld), Franz-Peter Mittag (Freiburg), Christoph Uehlinger (Zürich), Adrian Stäheli (Basel) and colleagues in Giessen and Erfurt. Hendrik Versnel's repeated criticism improved my argument and my English; I am grateful to Einar Thomassen for the documentation of the dissent remaining and his editorial care. I am grateful to the Max-Weber-Kolleg, Erfurt, for granting me a fellowship to start working on processes of rationalization in the Roman republic.

Thus the genesis and history of the triumph have been studied in detail by Versnel and Bonfante Warren.<sup>2</sup> Pietilä-Castrén and Orlin discuss the ritual in connection with the dedication and building of temples.<sup>3</sup> Hölkeskamp and Rüpke, the former in his work on the formation of the Roman nobility, the latter in studies devoted to the religious construction of war in ancient Rome, explore the triumph as one of the means by which a highly competitive aristocracy managed to focus its internal rivalries on strictly controlled fields of public activity.<sup>4</sup> And lately, Tanja Itgenshorst has stressed the conflictual dimension of the republican triumph, the discrepancy of credibility and power from contemporaries of Plautus down to Augustus.<sup>5</sup>

As goes without saying, Rome's imperial success during the period of the "enlightened Republic" depended much on how efficiently potentially disruptive internal rivalries could be channelled into military expansion. In this context, the triumph constituted one of the media through which the Roman nobility could display military victories and their rewards to the Roman populace, thereby helping to ensure its future participation in aristocratically directed warfare.<sup>6</sup> Hence the importance of the display of booty and military feats.<sup>7</sup> It is one of the most interesting aspects of this system of communication that it furnished hardly any institutionalized outlet for the communication, and public recognition, of military *defeats*. The Romans did not even have a parallel to the Greek cult of those who died during a victorious campaign.<sup>8</sup> The significance of the triumph

---

<sup>2</sup> Versnel 1970; Bonfante Warren 1970, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Pietilä-Castrén 1987; Orlin 1997. Cf. Ziolkowski 1992 for a survey of the archaeological data relating to mid-republican temples.

<sup>4</sup> Hölkeskamp 1987, reiterated in Hölkeskamp 1993; Rüpke 1990, and, more specifically, 1995. Cf. the discussion following Rosenstein's *Imperatores victi*: Rosenstein 1990a, 1990b; North 1990; Harris 1990. Cf. also Hölkeskamp 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Itgenshorst 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Stressed by Hölkeskamp 1987:219.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. for this dimension Östenberg 2003, and the analyses of Beard 2003, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Stressed by Rüpke 1994.

can further be gauged from the fact that, among the various alternatives of presenting and investing booty — such as temples, buildings or games<sup>9</sup> — it offered a prestige that from the second century BC onwards some tried to exploit far beyond the temporal framework of the ritual proper.<sup>10</sup>

Even after the triumphator's death, the deceased received conspicuous recognition for his achievement. In the funeral of a Roman noble, those of his ancestors who themselves had reached magistracies took part in the form of actors who, in addition to a wax-mask, wore the insignia and clothing of the highest office that the person they were impersonating had reached in life. Each magistrate was accompanied by the appropriate number of lictors, and counting them was the only means by which one could differentiate between former consuls, praetors, and aediles. All of them were dressed up in the *toga praetexta*, the white toga with a stripe of purple worn by Roman magistrates. For *triumphatores*, on the other hand, such arithmetic was unnecessary: their all-purple garment set them apart from the crowd of ordinary office-holders.

But what are the semantics of the triumphator and the masks behind the political communication? Do we have to postulate a change from a dominantly religious meaning, i.e. that the triumphator was meant to be, or at least represent, Jupiter, and that dead ancestors rumbled through the city during the *pompa funebris*,<sup>11</sup> to a dominantly political one? For the triumph one could imagine that such a change occurred at the end of the fourth century BC, that is, during the formative phase of the new nobility. In this case, the change in signification seems to have left the basic elements of the ritual unaltered. For the *pompa imaginum*, Harriet Flower argued for the transformation, at about the same period, of some unknown previous ritual into the known, primarily political event.<sup>12</sup> Yet in

---

<sup>9</sup> See Orlin 1997:66–73 for possible criteria and strategies.

<sup>10</sup> Beard, North, Price 1998:143.

<sup>11</sup> For the embodiment of dead ancestors, see explicitly Flower 1996:102.

<sup>12</sup> Accepted by e.g., Hölscher 2001:204. Cf. Hölscher 1978:325, where he only mentions private honorary statues.



order to save the hypothesis of a more religious earlier version of the aristocratic funeral and the cult of the ancestors (completely unknown to us), she has to argue that the entire complex of the funeral speech and the commemorative use of masks, with the storage of the latter in the *atrium*, is a non-religious addition of that period.<sup>13</sup> The only evidence for the postulated earlier stage is statuary representations of (what are supposedly) ancestors. Fully convincing parallels for that type of ancestor cult are lacking.<sup>14</sup>

This article offers a new hypothesis to understand the form and the significance of both rituals, by relating them to the practice of erecting honorific statues. The hypothesis is not supported by direct ancient evidence. Yet it better explains and historically contextualizes more of the odd features of the rituals (in particular the triumph) than previous attempts to understand them. The basic thesis is that by the fourth century BC the display of private statues in public space — not so much in view of the sheer quantity but because of the associations such statues evoked — was seen as a threat to the capacity of the nobility to regulate its internal competition.

## 2. Jupiter or *rex*?

What we know about the Roman triumph mostly stems from literary sources, from Livy onwards. The written sources on which these historians, antiquarians, or poets relied could not have gone further back than the end of the third century BC; usually they are later. The astonishingly few iconographic representations all come from the Principate.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, any attempt at reconstruction of the ritual for earlier periods is necessarily antiquarian, that is, involves selecting individual elements, or combinations of elements, and interpreting them as dysfunctional survivals from a time

---

<sup>13</sup> Flower 1996:341–43. See already Hölscher 1990:76.

<sup>14</sup> Likewise, there are no convincing parallels to help account for the innovation (Flower 1996:343–51).

<sup>15</sup> Künzl 1988 contains a useful presentation of the sources and a technical reconstruction.

when they must have had greater pragmatic meaning and value. This heuristic procedure is operative in every study of the Republican triumph, including my own.

How are we to envisage this ritual? On the most basic level, we are dealing with a procession of soldiers and booty that had its notional centre in the victorious general. The triumph was staged at the end of a campaign, after the return of the army, and was subject to the senate's approval. In legal terms, it involved the entry of a holder of *imperium* and of armed soldiers into the city proper. The crossing of the boundary line was therefore emphasized.<sup>16</sup> Booty and captives were presented to the populace; some of the prisoners might be put to death once the procession had reached the Capitoline hill. The ceremony was concluded with sacrifices to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, probably corresponding to the vows made upon departure, which were addressed to the same deity.<sup>17</sup> The whole procedure was supposed to honour the triumphing general. Riding in the centre of the procession, he wore a costume that the satirist Juvenal (later quoted by Servius) designated as *tunica Iovis*, "the tunic of Jupiter." Other paraphernalia, too, may have been designed to associate him with Jupiter: he wore a golden crown,<sup>18</sup> held a sceptre topped by an eagle, and rode in a quadriga that imitated the one which was displayed on the roof of the Capitoline temple. Modern scholars tend to view the satirical verses sung by the participants as apotropaic.<sup>19</sup> Antiquarians in antiquity, however, referred some of the symbols used in the triumph to Etruria and the period of the kings. Together with the apparent connection to Jupiter, this antiquarian claim has set the agenda for two centuries of modern

---

<sup>16</sup> Versnel 1970:132–63; Rüpke 1990:226–30.

<sup>17</sup> Rüpke 1990:225.

<sup>18</sup> Emphasized by Versnel 1970:74–77.

<sup>19</sup> Rüpke 1990:230–33. The interpretation is elaborated in detail by Köves-Zulauf 1972:122–49 in his analysis of the words which a slave, standing behind the triumphator, addressed to the general. A slave's monition to remember to be a human is already reported for Philip II of Macedon (Aelian, *Var. hist.* 8.15).

discussion, of whether the triumphator impersonated the god who was the embodiment of the entire *res publica*, namely Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, or rather revived the figure of the king.

I need not repeat the arguments. It was H.S. Versnel who demonstrated that the ostensible alternatives are not mutually exclusive, but two related facets of a religious ceremony known from the ancient Mediterranean world. According to Versnel, the triumph should be viewed as the modified form of a New Year's ritual during which the king confronted the highest god of the state and, in turn, became his embodiment or representative. The direct descendant of this festival is to be found on the Roman Ides of September, the *epulum Iovis* and the *ludi Romani*, opened by the *pompa circensis* that is so similar to the triumph, especially in the role played by the leading magistrate. One of Versnel's most important arguments involves the element of the triumph from which the ceremony, which had no fixed date in the calendar, derives its name: the soldiers' cry (*io*) *triumpe*. This formulation is used in the archaic *carmen Arvale*, a song that explicitly asked Mars and other deities for an epiphany and must stem from a cultic address to a deity from Asia minor, Dionysos, who was invited to appear with the cry *thríambe*.<sup>20</sup>

If Versnel's interpretation were entirely correct, I could stop here. There is, however, a serious problem with his solution: The historical Romans did not associate the appearance and acclamation of the triumphant general with his ascent to divine status, to say nothing of his transformation into *Iuppiter ipse*.<sup>21</sup> As is well known, the Roman nobility frowned upon peers who laid claim to royal power or identified themselves with the highest god of the *res publica*. Some even got killed for doing so. In a nutshell: why did

---

<sup>20</sup> See Varro, *Ling.* 6.68, who also already draws the connection with the triumph. For the New Year festival, see Versnel 1970:11ff.; 201ff. His basic argument is accepted by Coarelli 1988:414ff., in his analysis of the archaic triumph.

<sup>21</sup> This is admitted by Versnel 1970:1; cf. 92.

most of the triumphators survive their triumph for longer than, say, Julius Caesar did?

To concentrate on this problem is fair neither to Versnel nor to the complexities of the triumph, but it is crucial for any general interpretation of the ritual. In order to prepare the way for a new hypothesis, I want to invoke Victor Turner's principle of contextual meaning and start by addressing the relation between the triumph and the *pompa circensis*. The obvious parallels between the dress of the triumphator and of the magistrate who led the *pompa circensis* have led to several studies suggesting that there must have been a historical relationship between the two ceremonies.<sup>22</sup> Whereas Versnel argued, by analogy with the triumphator, for the god-like status of the magistrate, and sought to establish an original meaning by analyzing the rituals of the Ides of September, I shall reverse the approach and concentrate on differences rather than similarities.

First of all, Versnel's most convincing arguments in favour of the hypothesis that the triumphator impersonated Jupiter are based on elements of the costume that he shared with the leading magistrate of the *pompa circensis*. Leaving aside the dream of Augustus' father,<sup>23</sup> two of the sources that refer to the *ornatus Iovis* (or similarly) concern the triumphator, the other two refer to the magistrate.<sup>24</sup> The same holds true of the golden crown (*corona aurea* or *Etrusca*),

---

<sup>22</sup> Extensively discussed by Versnel 1970:101–15; 284–303. The treatment by Bernstein 1998:31–51 is unsatisfactory.

<sup>23</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 94.

<sup>24</sup> Triumphator: Liv. 10.7.10 (*ornatus Iovis*, no specific reference to the dress is detectable); Serv. *Ecl.* 10.27 (quoting Iuvenalis in referring to the *tunica palmata*); *pompa circensis*: Juv. 10.36–43 (*vestis*); Tert. *Cor.* 13.1 (*ab Iove insignes* syntactically separated from *palmatis togis*). No text explicitly states that the leader of the *pompa* in the *ludi Romani* wore the *ornatus* or *uestis triumphalis*. But everyone rightly infers from other games (such as the *ludi Apollinares*) that this was also the case in the city's most prestigious games (see e.g., Versnel 1970:130).

which is attested for both, triumphator and magistrate.<sup>25</sup> But is there any reason to identify the magistrates in charge of the *pompa* with Jupiter?<sup>26</sup> They were neither victorious nor were they permanently honoured, either in their lifetime or after death, for having performed in this ritual role. They were — and this needs to be stressed — never acclaimed with *io triumpe*. There is one further argument that makes such an identification highly unlikely. The most important task of the magistrate was to round out a procession of gods to the circus. But Jupiter himself had already appeared in the *pompa*, in the form of a statue which was paraded along together with those of the other gods. So why should he appear twice?

All this has important consequences for our interpretation of the triumphator. I submit that we can no longer regard the accoutrements the triumphator shared with the magistrates leading other processions as evidence of his assimilation to Jupiter. The fact that the costume worn by the protagonists in these rituals recalled the (occasional?) dress of the Capitoline statue of Jupiter,<sup>27</sup> does not imply that the Romans must have understood wearing the *tunica palmata*, the purple toga, or the gold crown (which was too heavy to be worn on the head and hence — in both cases — had to be held by a slave),<sup>28</sup> to mean that Jupiter was being impersonated.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Triumphator: Plin. *Nat.* 33.11; *pompa circensis*: Juv. 10.39–40; Tert. *Cor.* 13.1.

<sup>26</sup> I accept Versnel's refutation of Mommsen's theory (accepted e.g. by Wissowa 1912:452) that originally the *ludi* were simply the latter part of a triumph.

<sup>27</sup> I am convinced by Versnel's arguments (1970:73–74) for a strong interpretation of the relationship of the *uestis* with the statue of Jupiter.

<sup>28</sup> Even if associating the *processus consularis*, too, Juvenal (n. 24) is concentrating on the game-leading praetor.

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in his detailed account of the *pompa circensis* (7.70–72), does not even mention the leading magistrate, whom he was obviously unable to fit into his Greek interpretation of the ritual. If the magistrate had been considered to represent Jupiter/J Zeus, on the other hand, this would have been an easy task.

The same is true of the sceptre surmounted by an eagle, which again was perhaps common to both ritual roles:<sup>30</sup> it is too general a symbol of sovereignty to support the claim that the reference must be specifically to Jupiter.<sup>31</sup> In view of the fact that this combination of symbols could be used in different *ludi*, their meaning was most likely a generic one, and thus only loosely related to the specific contents of these rituals. The easiest way to interpret the costume is to see it as temporarily distinguishing an outstanding, extraordinary magistrate by means of regal symbols that, in other ritual contexts, were also used to honour Jupiter.<sup>32</sup>

There remain two differences between the triumphator and the magistrate. First, the triumphator rode in a *quadriga*, a chariot drawn by four horses, whereas the magistrate was granted only a *biga*, drawn by two horses.<sup>33</sup> The *quadriga*, being the more prestigious vehicle, elevated the triumphator above the normal magistrate. This might be taken to imply a reference to Jupiter, as well as to royal status, that is to say, to the highest degree of political power.<sup>34</sup> Second, apart from the *io triumpe*, the triumphator was also coloured in red, which is not attested for the magistrate. Does this mean that the Romans saw Jupiter at the heart of the triumphal procession, as Versnel maintains?<sup>35</sup> Or did they see something else?

---

<sup>30</sup> See the previous note.

<sup>31</sup> Thus Versnel 1970:77–78; cf. Waldner 2000:74–75. In the case of the triumphator an additional association or rather contrast with the departure of the general and his use of a spear to open hostilities might be implied. See Rüpke 1990:105–8.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Bonfante Warren 1970:59.

<sup>33</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 34.20; for the archaeological evidence see Bernstein 1998:53–57.

<sup>34</sup> Hence Versnel 1970:78 lays no stress on the *quadriga*. Given that his main interest is in the similarities of the two rituals which he takes to have developed from a common Etruscan prototype, it is perhaps unsurprising that he does not systematically explore the equally obvious differences between them.

<sup>35</sup> Versnel 1970:78–82.

### 3. *Parading a Living Statue*

The earliest and principal source for the colouring of the triumphator with red paint is Pliny the Elder:

*... Iovis ipsius simulacri faciem diebus festis minio inlini solitam triumphantiumque corpora; sic Camillum triumphasse; hac religione etiam num addi in unguenta cenae triumphalis et a censoribus in primis Iovem minian-dam locari.*

... on feast-days, it was customary for the face of the statue of Jupiter himself to be painted with red-lead, likewise the body of triumphators. Camillus is said to have held a triumph thus painted. It was the same religious impulse that caused red-lead to be included among the substances employed at the triumphal meal, and one of the censors' first duties is to let out the contract for painting Jupiter with red-lead.<sup>36</sup>

Now, why should the face of the statue of Jupiter be painted red? The answer has nothing to do with some proto-historic use of red colour, as Versnel suggests,<sup>37</sup> but with material conditions. The statue would have been made of terracotta, like the Hercules *fictilis* of the Ara Maxima.<sup>38</sup> This meant that, instead of the oil used in caring for statues of marble, the freshening up of the natural colour (as opposed to the parts that were specially painted) was done by using red paint.<sup>39</sup> If this is correct, we need look no further for an explanation of why a Roman triumphator celebrated the ritual

---

<sup>36</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 33.111f.; Serv. (auct.) *Ecl.* 6.22; 10.27; Isid. *Orig.* 18,2,6; Ioan. Tzetzes, *Epist.* 97 (= Dio 6), *Chil.* 13.35–48 Leone. For the statue, see Plut. *q. R.* 98.

<sup>37</sup> See Versnel 1970:78–81; tentatively Bonfante Warren 1970:54.

<sup>38</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 35.157. For the site see Coarelli 1988:81.

<sup>39</sup> Thus already Wissowa 1912:127 and Wunderlich 1925:63, drawing on Plin. *Nat.* 35.157 and 33.111–12. Despite the fact that the original inspiration for Wunderlich's thesis came from Ludwig Deubner, her book tends to reject "primitive" interpretation and to put emphasis on contemporary sources rather than ethnographic parallels, thus acknowledging the influence of her examiners Otto Kern and Georg Wissowa. For further references to the application of red colour to statues see Versnel 1970:79, n. 5 (implying different interpretations).

painted red. He was covered in paint in imitation, not so much of Jupiter, as of a statue in terracotta.<sup>40</sup> Being carried in a frozen pose in a chariot,<sup>41</sup> with red colour applied to his body (i.e. the visible parts of his skin), he was meant to recall a terracotta statue. The ancient Romans watching a triumph saw a procession in which a “stand-in” terracotta statue was carried into the city. They saw neither the (temporary) return of the monarchy, nor Jupiter returning home or being carried in state. For Jupiter, as I have pointed out above, was a familiar figure on Roman streets. Everyone knew what he looked like: he was paraded around town on a litter, in the form of a statue or bust, or represented simply by his *insignia*, especially the thunder-bolt, which were conveyed in a *tensa*, a special car that in olden times was drawn by children. No one would have confused him with a triumphator.

#### 4. *Statues for the Nobility*

Here, then, is the long form of my hypothesis: In the sole form known to the Romans of the late Republic and the Empire, the triumph was an invention of the second half of the fourth century BC. It was a ritual that followed upon the (often difficult) decision of the senate to publicly acknowledge the martial achievements of a returning general. In the context of a growing fashion for displaying private statuary on public ground (described by Demosthenes as a contemporary Greek development),<sup>42</sup> the Roman nobility as a whole tried to channel their desire for public prestige into a ritual that involved the publicly financed impersonation of a consciously archaic form of terracotta statues. And who could better act the part

---

<sup>40</sup> Klearchos, tyrant of Herakleia in the middle of the fourth century BC, deliberately dressed himself as a statue of a god — and painted his face red. See Versnel 1970:80, without the explanation that Klearchus wished to imitate a statue.

<sup>41</sup> The arguments are given by Köves-Zulauf 1972:140.

<sup>42</sup> See Wallace-Hadrill 1990:151–53.



of the temporary statue than the one who was honoured by it? The ritual would not compel the honorand to reject later real statuary. Forming part of the creation of, and the attempt to control, a monumentalized commemorative culture,<sup>43</sup> such a ritual would even increase the symbolic value of such statues and legitimize their public display.

Sehlmeyer has recently observed that the earliest known honorific statues, that is, statues put up for a living person, represented triumphators. He went on to postulate a regular connection between triumphs and honorific statues, *Ehrenstatuen*.<sup>44</sup> The first recorded instance of this connection (for the year 338 BC) coincides with the first award of an honorific statue after the famous Camillus. After the successful completion of the war against Pedum, the final phase of the Latin wars 340–338 BC, the consuls L. Furius Camillus and C. Maenius “returned to Rome for the triumph decreed by the consensus of all. To the triumph the honour was added that they receive equestrian statues in the Forum, a rare event at that period” (*Romam ad destinatum omnium consensu triumphum decessere. additus triumpho honos, ut statuæ equestres eis, rara illa ætate res, in foro ponerentur*).<sup>45</sup>

Livy stresses that the statues were *equestrian*, which implies a conceptual link between the simple award of a statue and the tri-

---

<sup>43</sup> See Hölscher 2001:187–88, who interprets the erection of a statue as the moment in time when current, functional knowledge was transformed into an element of historical memory and thereby afforded new forms of recognition and prestige. See also Hölkeskamp 2000; Sehlmeyer 2000.

<sup>44</sup> Sehlmeyer 1999:134. The connection had already been formulated less precisely by Lahusen 1983:67, who identified a statue given to M. Furius Camillus as a triumphator (over the Volsci and Aequi) after 389 BC. A discussion of these theses is lacking in Hölscher 2001:194–98, who dealt with honorific statues only as regards their placing along the route of the triumph. Already Wallace-Hadrill 1990:173 strongly argued against the assumption that statues were regularly granted by the Senate as a retrojection by authors writing during the Empire.

<sup>45</sup> Liv. 8.13.9.

umph. Did Livy's Augustan construct reflect the situation at the end of the fourth century? Anthropomorphic divine images had been frequent,<sup>46</sup> but the same did not hold true for honorific statues of living people.<sup>47</sup> There is no evidence that the practice became common in Greek states before the late fourth century. There are isolated stories of statues being put up in Rome before then. Whether these stories are trustworthy is controversial.<sup>48</sup> Hölscher and Sehlmeier are in agreement that, at Rome, the practice of displaying statues in public began during the latter part of the fourth century, and led to a variety that greatly surpassed any known Greek models.<sup>49</sup> There are other indications that new commemorative practices emerged at the same time, such as the reorganization of the Forum initiated after 318 BC during the censorship of Maenius, who had previously, as noted already, been honoured by an equestrian statue and put up the so-called *Maenianum*, a building that featured a gallery for spectators.<sup>50</sup>

We should not assume, however, that this development was directed by the senate. It is more plausible to assume that private initiative was responsible for the pursuit of the attractive possibility to represent, multiply, and immortalize one's likeness in a form and size previously reserved for gods. The warrior of Capestrano might be seen as evidence of such experiments. The granting of triumphs by the end of the fourth century may be seen as a reaction to this development, an attempt to regulate, and bring under senatorial control, an increasingly common private practice which had only recently become fashionable. Attempts to circumscribe the

---

<sup>46</sup> See Scheer 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 34.17; Hölscher 1978:328; Sehlmeier 1999:22.

<sup>48</sup> See the criticism of Hölscher 2001: *passim*, of Sehlmeier's rejection of every early statue that might threaten his account. Wallace-Hadrill 1990 too is sceptical.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Hölscher 2001:202.

<sup>50</sup> Fest. 120 L; Varro, *De vita p. R.* fr. 72 Riposati; for the following course of action see Hölscher 1978:319; Coarelli 1985:87–119 (on the statues and the ruling on the *faenatores*); Flower 1996:341.

award of statues displayed in public continued throughout the rest of Roman (and, indeed, European) history.<sup>51</sup> The public ritual and the (mostly) private erection of a statue complemented one another. Booty may have been displayed both during the triumph and at the site of the statue. Maenius built the famous tribunal for the speakers, the *rostra*, as location for this purpose, and some of the earliest attested statues represented the donator beside votive images of gods. The statue on the Capitol of the triumphator Spurius Carvilius, for example, stood close to a colossal image of Jupiter.<sup>52</sup> In the triumph various media interacted in the representation of both the triumphator and booty, and this interaction is crucial to a proper understanding of the ritual.

If a late fourth-century date for the invention of the triumph can be maintained,<sup>53</sup> the decision to represent the victor by means of a (fictitious) terracotta image of a type that was also in use in other

---

<sup>51</sup> See below, and Tanner 2000:25ff. for the late Republic.

<sup>52</sup> Hölscher 1978:322–24: “Beuteanathem”; Sehlmeier 1999:113–16; more generally 128–29, 280.

<sup>53</sup> Some comparatively reliable notices in our literary sources about the display of triumphal statues suggest the late fourth century as the *terminus ante quem* for the emergence of the triumph in its classical form. Other aspects that impinge upon the question involve the rather dimly known spread of honorific statues in the wider Mediterranean world of the fifth and fourth centuries and the largely simultaneous process of the formation of the new Roman nobility during the fourth century BC. Decisive steps seem to have been taken in the wake of the constitutional changes marked by the so-called Sextian-Licinian laws, which are traditionally dated to 367 BC. Another line of argument is to exploit the similarities between triumph and *pompa circensis*. In conjunction with the admission of plebeians to the consulship in 367 BC (or thereabouts), the magistracy of the *aediles curules* was created, whose task it was to oversee the public games (see Bernstein 1998:58). As a result, the *pompa* celebrated during the *ludi* was no longer led by the supreme officer of the republic, but by lesser magistrates, who, for the time of the ritual only, assumed, by means of their clothing, the role of the “king’s successor,” which had previously been performed by the consul. This change in ritual procedure made the paraphernalia (and their semantics) free to be used in other rituals as well, as the immediate proliferation of games and the length of the

ritual contexts, must have been deliberate. Its chief attraction was that it gave prominence to the ritual associations of the statue and thereby stressed the role of senatorial control, even if the later erection of a permanent statue, and the choice of material for it, left plenty of scope for further semantic distinctions and the adoption of current technical standards. Bronze became the minimum standard for honorific statues; gilding would represent an exceptional honour.<sup>54</sup> A chryselephantine statue, on the other hand, indicated a definite transgression of the borderline between man and god. Such a statue was employed in the final honours for the dictator Caesar.<sup>55</sup> Whereas pedestrian statues became regular for magistrates who died while serving on foreign embassies,<sup>56</sup> a statue on horseback or even in a *currus* would be awarded to victorious magistrates or persons who had otherwise distinguished themselves in the service of the *res publica*. It should, however, again be stressed that it was not the statue but the accompanying public ritual that was central. Statues might be erected by all sorts of individuals or groups, but it was the performance of the public ritual that generated their status, thus blurring the difference between public and private.<sup>57</sup>

### 5. *Changes in the Ritual*

As Versnel was able to demonstrate, the *honos* of the triumph was never seen as an honour for the gods.<sup>58</sup> Honouring the gods was the function of *supplicationes*, festivals of thanksgiving that were decreed “in the name of the victor” (as the later formula

---

games seem to indicate. It is this semantic development that I claim as a *terminus post quem* for the creation of the ritual of the triumph in its classical form.

<sup>54</sup> See Cic. *Phil.* 5.41; Lahusen 1999.

<sup>55</sup> Dio 43.14.3–7. See Tanner 2000:28 and, for late antiquity, Niquet 2000: 77–78. For chryselephantine statuary in general: Lapatin 2001:120–33.

<sup>56</sup> Tanner 2000:26.

<sup>57</sup> See Wallace-Hadrill 1990:162–65.

<sup>58</sup> Versnel 1970:170–74; wrongly Gruen 1996:220–22.

run),<sup>59</sup> once reports of the victory had been received. From a religious point of view, a strict separation of human and divine honours was necessary. While it was possible to deny a triumph to a general, the *res publica* could not dare to withhold what was due to the gods. Still, problems remain. After all, the ritual involved the deposition of the laurel wreath to Jupiter and the sacrifice of oxen on the Capitoline hill. In other words, we have to look for precedents for and influences on the “enlightened” triumph other than the Hellenistic *pompae* on which it was so clearly modelled in its ostentatious display of booty.<sup>60</sup>

Rome’s aristocracy engaged in “gentilician warfare” before the formation of the nobility. Only gradually, these wars became a matter for the entire commonwealth. As demonstrated in the reconstruction of the history of the fetial rites, gentilician warfare was an enterprise carried out by individual families, perhaps for their personal enrichment, but it constituted at the same time a public problem.<sup>61</sup> We may expect that earlier rites of return from military campaigns centred on the religious obligations of the leaders. They had to fulfil their vows and dedicate part of the booty to specific deities. The deities to which the dedication was made might have been chosen according to the individual preference of the general, family tradition, or more general rules that are perhaps still reflected in the so-called *leges regiae*, the royal laws that defined the dedication of *spolia opima*, the spoils taken from the opposing leader.<sup>62</sup> It is crucial to note that the Romans understood these regulations to require the victorious general to walk on his feet while carrying himself the spoils to be dedicated. Of equal importance is the fact

---

<sup>59</sup> See Rüpke 1990:215–17; in general Halkin 1953; Freyburger 1988; Hickson Hahn 2000.

<sup>60</sup> For the latter point see Hölscher 1990:76.

<sup>61</sup> Rüpke 1990:97–124.

<sup>62</sup> For the *spolia opima* see Rüpke 1990:217–23; the (Varronian?) text of the *lex regia* is given by Fest. 204 L. Cf. Plut. *Marc.* 8.5. The addressees are Iuppiter Feretrius, Mars in Campo, and Ianus Quirinus, respectively.

that the return to the city and its boundary was a highly sensitive occasion. Rome was completely walled during the early republic, and entering the city with an armed group must have been restricted or even banned.<sup>63</sup>

Even if Augustan historiography associated with one another ritual performances like the *ovatio*, the entering on foot, the *triumphus in monte Albano* (a triumph at the federal sanctuary that was celebrated for the first time in 231 BC and did not require the senate's consent), and the special form of dedication performed on the spoils of the hostile general, the *spolia opima*,<sup>64</sup> the "real" triumph decreed by the senate differed from the Alban triumph as regards the location (the Roman Capitol instead of the federal sanctuary) and from the *ovatio* and the dedication of the *spolia opima* with respect to how the general moved during the ritual. He arrived standing on a chariot (rather than approaching on foot), and the red paint that, as I have suggested, assimilated the triumphator to a motionless statue, would have further highlighted the difference. Public accountability for the warfare and its gains was important since the successful conclusion of a campaign brought an enormous amount of material benefits to the victorious general and opened many options for prestigious ritual activities.<sup>65</sup> The wide range of available ritual alternatives mentioned above, the amount of public statuary in public space, and the granting of often dubious triumphs give an indication of the small degree of success achieved by this form of control.<sup>66</sup>

The new processional ritual conformed with the growing importance of the publicity and visibility of Roman rituals. It should be

---

<sup>63</sup> This brief sketch basically agrees with the reconstruction of the pre-Etruscan form of the triumph in Bonfante Warren 1970:50–56.

<sup>64</sup> Versnel 1970:165–68; Rüpke 1990:217–28; for the Augustan interest in reintegrating his own military successes of the civil war see Itgenshorst 2005:221–23.

<sup>65</sup> For the concept of senatorial control see Rich 1976; for the later republic, Hackl 1982; Rüpke 1990:120–24.

<sup>66</sup> Itgenshorst 2005 stresses the conflictual character of the republican triumph.

pointed out that another form of military procession may have been invented only shortly afterwards, supposedly in 304 BC, the so-called *transvectio equitum*.<sup>67</sup> The gods were honoured by the display of booty, too. Other rituals of thanksgiving, called *supplicationes*, took place before the celebration of the triumph. The general was also expected to discharge his personal obligations to the divinities afterwards, after the sacrifice to Jupiter that concluded the triumph and corresponded to the vow of departure. The name of the new ritual offers the best indicator of its focus: *triumphus* and *triumphator* derive from the exclamation *triumpe*, which, initially, must have been of mocking character, an outcry that accompanied the general standing still on his chariot, playing his own statue. We are dealing with a form of *iambízein*, which focused its satirizing thrust on the chief protagonist of the triumph, as it did in the *pompa funebris* with the important and rich deceased.<sup>68</sup> The mockery of the soldiers was not “apotropaic,” but rather formed a rite of reversal (and substantial public critique) in the presence of a superior who had enjoyed the right over the life and death of his inferiors and was now confined to immobility by the rite.

## 6. *The Media of Representation*

The triumph was a serious matter. Many members of Rome’s ruling elite vied for the honour. The temporary appearance as a statue gave symbolic value to the permanent, too. To be permanently represented by a statue in a public place, a distinction previously by and large restricted to divinities, was as close to immortality as a Roman aristocrat could get.<sup>69</sup> The prestige was immense, and the Romans developed considerable ingenuity to enhance the visual impact of individual statues even further. Some claimed attention by being

---

<sup>67</sup> See Weinstock 1937:17–18. Favro 1994 stresses the enduring impact of the monumentalized processional route.

<sup>68</sup> Dion. H. 7.72.11–12.

<sup>69</sup> Stewart 2003.

put up next to monuments of colossal size, such as larger-than-life statues of Jupiter and Hercules.<sup>70</sup> Others stuck out by being elevated on columns or arches.<sup>71</sup> The dress differed as well: some chose representation in armour, others preferred the *toga*.<sup>72</sup> The statue built or given on the basis of a triumph soon became the pinnacle and centre of a much wider practice. If consuls leading a *pompa triumphalis* were honoured with *quadrigae*, why not give *chariots* to praetors and *aediles* leading a *pompa circensis*? It was, in any case, one's role in processional rites that functioned as the criterion of legitimacy for the public display of a statue.<sup>73</sup>

Still, Roman culture was first and foremost theatrical.<sup>74</sup> Frequently backed by public money, Roman generals of the middle and late Republic often used part of their military booty for building temples, but, as Orlin points out, nineteen out of twenty preferred to spend their booty on games. In contrast to temples, which were owned by deities, the generals themselves could preside over games.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, it was the triumphal procession, rather than the statue, that made the largest impression upon the Roman populace. Even the emperors, at a time when most generals could no longer hope to celebrate their own triumph, did not object to a bronze statue at the centre of the *ornamenta triumphalia*.<sup>76</sup> By using the

---

<sup>70</sup> See Hölscher 1978:323–24 on monumentalization.

<sup>71</sup> For republican arches see de Maria 1988:31–53. See *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae* 4 (1999) 353–72 s.v. *statua* for the range of realizations. Plattus 1983 stresses the ritual framing of the arches of the centre of Rome.

<sup>72</sup> Hölscher 1978:343.

<sup>73</sup> See Plin. *Nat.* 34.20: *Non uetus et bigarum celebratio in iis, qui praetura functi curru uecti essent per circum.*

<sup>74</sup> Dupont 1994:31; for the triumph see 25–26.

<sup>75</sup> Orlin 1997:68–70.

<sup>76</sup> See Tac. *Agr.* 40.1: *triumphalia ornamenta et inlustris statuae honorem et quidquid pro triumpho datur.* More precise is Dio, 55.10.3, who indicates that bronze statues were a regular feature already in the time of Augustus. The term was new: Suet. *Tib.* 9.2. It should be noted that at the same time even the use of the *biga* was (occasionally?) denied to magistrates leading games: Tac. *Ann.* 1.15.



term *ovans triumphavi* in his *Res gestae*, Augustus employed another strategy to separate triumphal honours and the *pompa* proper.<sup>77</sup>

The triumph further affords a new perspective on the history of art. The “temporary work of art” that consisted in the living statue of the triumphator was only one of a growing number of various improvised “temporary images,” such as soldiers or captives arranged into battle scenes.<sup>78</sup> It is here that we have to look for the Roman origins of triumphal painting.<sup>79</sup> Henner von Hesberg used the term “temporary images” (*temporäre Bilder*) to describe nearly contemporaneous practices at Hellenistic courts, such as are documented for us by Calixeinus’ lengthy description of a festival given by Ptolemy II.<sup>80</sup> It was this demonstrative element of the whole complex that drew most of the public interest and afforded a specific celebration the best chances to enter into the literary tradition, as is evinced by the lengthy descriptions that the extraordinary triumphs of Aemilius Paulus or Pompey received.<sup>81</sup> The further development of the triumph may be described in terms of increased theatricalization: The ritual dress, which originally simply denoted unsurpassable authority,<sup>82</sup> was elaborated into a *tunica palmata* and a *toga picta*<sup>83</sup> and was used on further occasions and in statutory representations. The triumph was only one of the occasions to

---

<sup>77</sup> August. *Gest.* 4. See also Nickbakht 2005.

<sup>78</sup> For the impression of the latter as living images see Brilliant 1999. See Fless 2004:43 for a catalogue of representations. Plutarch (*q. R.* 111) conceptualized the Flamen Dialis as “a living statue” (*émpsychon kai hieròn ágalma*), as pointed out by Scheid 2004.

<sup>79</sup> See Hölscher 1978:341; cf. Holliday 2002.

<sup>80</sup> Athen. 5,196a–203b quoting Calixeinus of Rhodes; Hesberg 1989:65ff. Only in his very last sentence does von Hesberg point to the Roman adoption of such practices. See Rice 1983 for a detailed analysis of the procession.

<sup>81</sup> Aemilius: Diod. 31.7.9–12; Plut. *Aem. Paul.* 32–34; Cn. Pompeius: App. *Mithr.* 116–17; Plut. *Pomp.* 45.

<sup>82</sup> For the problem, see Versnel 1970:72–78 (with the opposite result).

<sup>83</sup> See Fest. 228 L.

present military success among the varied iconography of rituals, victory celebrations, and the public conclusion of treaties.<sup>84</sup>

The honorific statue remains of crucial importance. There is a discourse about statues in our literary sources, and, at least in the time of Cicero, this discourse was very important. His *Orationes Verrianae* bear witness to this. Statues of Marius were put up and removed; Verres' intentions and his prestige with the Sicilians can be measured by the way they dealt with statues. To a large extent, the discourse on Caesar's desire for deification is a discourse about statues. Earlier, once honorific statues had started to fill public space, memorial statues of historically important people, of kings and liberators, were added.<sup>85</sup> Statues created complex mnemotopes.<sup>86</sup> *Damnationes memoriae* tried to make sure that the persons annihilated disappeared from these mnemotopes, too.<sup>87</sup> Statues were not just representations of individuals but conveyed messages relating to collective values, as is demonstrated by the generally stern mien of Roman portraits.<sup>88</sup> Finally, when Roman coinage started to

---

<sup>84</sup> See Hölscher 1978:349, who observes that the Roman concept of an historical event was focussed on ceremonial and representative fixations of political situations and ideals ("... die zeremoniellen und repräsentativen Besiegelungen politischer Zustände und Ideale zum Inhalt hat").

<sup>85</sup> Hölscher 1978:349; Sehlmeier 1999:67–103.

<sup>86</sup> Hölscher 2001.

<sup>87</sup> As regulated in the *Senatusconsultum de Gn. Pisone patre* ll. 74–82: *utiq(ue) statuae et imagines Cn. Pisoni patris, quae ubiq(ue) positae essent, tollerentur; recte et ordine facturos qui quandoq(ue) familiae Calpurniae essent, quiue eam familiam cognatione adfinitateue contingerent, si dedissent operam, si quis eius gentis aut quis eorum, qui cognatus adfiniue Calpurniae familiae fuiesset, mortuos esset, lugendus esset, ne inter reliquas imagines, <quibus> exequias eorum funerum celebrare solent, imago Cn. Pisoni patris duceretur, neue imaginibus familiae Calpurniae imago eius interponeretur*. See Flower 1996:24–31; Arce 1999:329; for the Republic, see Varner 2004:16–20.

<sup>88</sup> Verism, which is much more dominant in Roman than in Hellenistic portraits, and is not a casual development of style, has been interpreted as an expression of the subordination of the hardships of individual human lives to the service of the *res publica* (Gruen 1992:170; for the earlier period see Hölscher 1978:340), but

develop its individualism in the last third of the second century BC, statues were among the first personal, or rather family-oriented, motives represented.<sup>89</sup>

There is a curious consequence of the conceptual relationship between the triumph and public honorific statues. Only one group of Romans is formally equivalent to triumphators, the *virgines Vestales*. Both share the right to be buried within the boundaries of the city,<sup>90</sup> together they are the earliest groups in Roman historical memory to receive public statues.<sup>91</sup> When the honouring of Livia in 9 BC firmly turned the rare practice of giving statues to women into a prerogative of the imperial *domus*, regulations were made that not only associated her with the Vestals, but had direct connections with the triumph as well. She was credited with *omina* that predicted her giving birth to future *triumphatores* and even organized a banquet for the women of Rome, parallel to Tiberius' triumphal banquet following his *ovatio* (on behalf of Drusus).<sup>92</sup> Just like a triumphator's, Livia's right to a public statue was beyond discussion.

## 7. Pompa imaginum

A further mode of representing honorific statues in republican Rome has to be considered. It is possible to conceive of the entourage of dead ancestors, represented by actors wearing masks, which made

---

Tanner 2000 has made a case for placing the development of the veristic style in the 2nd century BC within the institutional context of Roman patronage, especially as extended onto foreign citizens.

<sup>89</sup> *RRC* 242/1; 263/1 and later. See Sehlmeier 1999:181. For this process in general, see Meadows and Williams 2001:37–38.

<sup>90</sup> Plut. *q. R.* 79; Serv. *Aen.* 11.206.

<sup>91</sup> See Plin. *Nat.* 34.25, with Flory 1993:288–89, and Val. Max. 1.8.11 for Claudia Quinta.

<sup>92</sup> The sources are given by Flory 1993:295–97. Flory herself does not pay special attention to the triumphal associations but (rightly) stresses the parallel construction of the women honoured as valorous men.

up the procession that led a recently deceased former magistrate of the Republic from his house to the place of burning or burial, as consisting of all those members of the family who had been awarded a legitimate honorific statue, or at least had the right to one. (We do not know whether every aedile of the late republic received the statue that was his due during his lifetime, but I suspect they did.)

Flower has argued that those aspects of the ritual that involved the wearing of masks and the laudatory speech cannot be older than the end of the fourth century. *Termini post quem* (or coequal processes) are the restructuring of the Forum (the place where the *laudatio funebris* was delivered) and the emergence of the individualistic statuary portraits.<sup>93</sup> Flower, however, had to leave open a crucial problem that also figures largely in all the older studies on the history of the masks. What are the ritual and artificial antecedents of those masks that — according to the classical description by Polybios — tried to portray the dead ancestors as realistically as possible?<sup>94</sup> The traditional explanation, which invoked magic rituals applied to the dead and posited a connection to a death mask (still maintained by Heinrich Drerup in 1980), has by now been soundly refuted on the grounds of archaeological and literary evidence.<sup>95</sup> But the problem disappears if one applies the concept of “temporary images” to the ritual.

If the masks were intended to copy existing honorific statues or fictive memorial ones (as the line of ancestors grew longer and

---

<sup>93</sup> Flower 1996:341–43. If my thesis is tenable, Hölscher’s claim (2001:205) that public gentilician representation in the form of statues did not start before the middle of the second century BC will have to be modified, though he stresses the importance of ritual “performances” of statues. Bianchi’s discussion (1994) remains without clear results.

<sup>94</sup> Polyb. 6.53 (likeness: 6.53.5).

<sup>95</sup> Drerup 1980 (for magic: 119, 127); contra Lahusen 1985:263–65. It would be interesting to look for the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Polybios’ description on early modern aristocratic and monarchic funeral practices (cf. Grimes 1995:80).

longer due to late republican competition and historical fiction),<sup>96</sup> one need no longer worry about the origin of the masks. They were either historical copies of models used for the production of the statues themselves or easily copied from the actual statue. Hence the proliferation of masks of common ancestors that would be used in many agnate and cognate families at the same time was no technical problem. At the same time, the known statues would have set standards of individuality that had to be strived for: “likeness,” not fancy, was a necessity.

Recent research has shown the convergence of the range of masks and statues, as far as the recipients are concerned. This convergence can no longer be explained by a postulated *ius imaginum* that would regulate both cases in like manner.<sup>97</sup> The primary factor was the proliferation of statues, finally reaching down to *aediles*. Despite the attempts of Flower to play down all the other forms of portraits,<sup>98</sup> already Hölscher, who thought of “historical” masks and statues as parallel developments, demonstrated that ancient discourse was much more concerned with statues than with ancestor masks.<sup>99</sup> The *pompa imaginum* and the *laudatio funebris* must be seen as attempts to reactualize and extend the impression made by the honorific statues with a focus on a family. By such means as cheap masks, actors and oratory the family ensemble could be represented and displayed, and defined according to needs.<sup>100</sup> Here,

---

<sup>96</sup> See Dondin-Payre 1990:58–59, 66–72 for the creation of fictive genealogies. Such fictions did enhance the normative value of genealogy, as is rightly noticed by Hölkeskamp 1996:322.

<sup>97</sup> Flower 1996:53–56, against Lahusen 1983:113–27; Lahusen 1985.

<sup>98</sup> Flower 1996:70ff.

<sup>99</sup> Hölscher 1978:325. However, the argument should be built on sources like Ennius (e.g. *Scipio* = var. 1–2 Vahlen; cf. Liv. 38.56.22; Val. Max. 4.1.6) or Cicero, rather than on Pliny’s book dealing with metals (*naturalis historia* 34,15ff.); cf. Drerup 1980:127.

<sup>100</sup> For the constructive character of the Roman *gens* and *familia* see Corbier 1990; Dondin-Payre 1990.

again, Greek temporary images might have been a source of inspiration, festival practices that delighted in the visualization of groups of people, perhaps even genealogies.<sup>101</sup> In contrast to the Hellenistic festivals centred on courts that were locally fixed and would therefore stress the arrangement of real statuary, the Roman practice, as part of the competition within a polyfocal aristocracy, laid stress on rituals in public space and on actors performing statues, a feature also popular in the festivals of early Hellenism.<sup>102</sup>

None of this excludes statuary programs in private villas, shown in the context of private festivals. The presentation of masks and *tituli* to clients and visitors in the *atrium* of the house of a Roman noble attests to the interest in demonstrating a complete lineage — and to the limits of this interest. More impressive arrangements than closed cupboards and depicted genealogical trees were possible!<sup>103</sup> Not masks and cupboards (even if they were better preserved) dominate the archaeological records from Roman villas, but fully fledged portrait busts and statuary.<sup>104</sup> It is only by being placed in a spectacular location that a mask could be endowed with

---

<sup>101</sup> Hesberg 1989. A genealogical row of figures might have been part of the tomb of Nikokreon, king of Salamis, from the end of the fourth century BC (ibid., 67–68).

<sup>102</sup> Hesberg 1989:77. This is one of the elements that argue — against Sehlmeier 1999 — for a priority of the Greek form, and hence for a process of reception like those shown for a wide range of elements by Hölscher 1990. What is important is not the temporal priority of invention, but the different use to which these inventions (and even their producers, Greek artists, see Gruen 1992:140) are put. Drerup, too, thought he had identified pure Roman forms and institutions in the use of the wax mask (1980:120). For the Greek use of masks, see e.g. Carter 1987; Frontisi-Ducroux 1991; for other Roman practices, see Meuli 1955.

<sup>103</sup> The “Kastengräber” of freedmen, showing reliefs of persons as if looking out of a window (“Fenstergucker”) are interpreted by Lahusen 1985:283–84 as an even more economic form of presentation.

<sup>104</sup> See Niquet 2000:26–27, for the 4th century AD. In neither case, however, do we detect traces of ancestor cult, as I was reminded by Andreas Bendlin.

permanent importance: The deposition of the mask of Scipio Africanus in the temple of Jupiter<sup>105</sup> was a spectacular act of this kind, making its impression not by virtue of the inherent quality of the mask but by the contrast between the public location and the intimate, domestic object.<sup>106</sup>

My thesis has several further advantages. The ancient Romans were strikingly preoccupied with, and careful in, their dealings with spirits and shadows, as evinced by such festivals as the Parentalia, the Lemuria, or the *kalendae fabariae*.<sup>107</sup> This preoccupation would seem to make their nonchalance about the appearance of dead ancestors during the *pompa funebris* strikingly odd. But if the actors who represented these ancestors by wearing masks are seen as representing statues, rather than dead persons, the apparent oddity that the Romans did not seem to worry about dead people rumbling through their city disappears. A procession formed by living statues was much more comfortable to deal with. By the time of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but probably much earlier, perhaps right from the start, the satirical figures of the *pompa circensis*, too, formed part of, or had entered into, the funeral *exsequiae*.<sup>108</sup> Only by the time of Principate, as is attested for the funeral of Vespasian (though qualified as *mos*), did the actors no longer just

---

<sup>105</sup> Val. Max. 8.15.1–2.; App. *Iber.* 89.

<sup>106</sup> Flower 1996:48–51.

<sup>107</sup> See Toynbee 1971:33–42 and, concentrating on the funerary rites, Deschamps 1995; cf. Bremmer 1994 and Sourvinou-Inwood 1995 for Greece, Briquel 1987 for Etruria. This problem, first articulated in a discussion of a paper given by Egon Flaig at the university of Tübingen, was in fact the beginning of my thinking about Roman masks and the red face of the triumphator. Kierdorf 1991:84–85 solves the problem by stressing the close relationship between the living and the dead in Rome, shown in particular by the *pompa imaginum*. Dupont 1987:171 had offered a solution by maintaining that the masks represented the living part of the dead, without any defilement; she was followed in principle by Belayche 1995:160.

<sup>108</sup> Dion. H. 7.72.13.

imitate motionless statues carried in chariots (as in the time of Polybios),<sup>109</sup> but interacted with the spectators. Having heard that the *pompa* cost ten million sesterces, Favor, imitating Vespasian in words and deeds, exclaimed: “Give me just one hundred thousand and throw me into the Tiber!”<sup>110</sup>

Such sums were necessary not just to pay for the actors, but to attract the necessary public by the promise of a subsequent lavish banquet and *munera*, gladiatorial shows.<sup>111</sup> The temporary medium of the ritual had its prize, too. And yet, there is an important difference as regards the triumph. Whereas the triumph as a ritual was depicted and carved into reliefs, not a single instance of an ancient representation of the *pompa imaginum* is known.<sup>112</sup> This observation may have a chronological explanation: In the heyday of preserved relief, i.e. the Principate, the *pompa imaginum* had already fallen into disuse.<sup>113</sup> But I would suggest that there is another reason as well. Whereas the triumph was an argument in itself, the funerary procession by and large displayed only existent statuary. Not the ritual but the number of statues was to be multiplied — again the aftermath of the *funus* is a typical instigation for the creation of public honorific statues for the defunct immediately afterwards.<sup>114</sup> Finally, one further difference should be pointed out. The triumph normally presupposed a senatorial decision recognizing the legitimacy of the general’s claim to be honoured. Such formalized control is lacking for the *funus*. Descent from famous Roman families

---

<sup>109</sup> Polyb. 6.53.8.

<sup>110</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 19.2: *Se et in funere Fauor archimimus personam eius ferens imitansque, ut est mos, facta ac dicta uiui, interrogatis palam procuratoribus, quanti funus et pompa constaret, ut audit sestertium centiens, exclamauit, centum sibi sestertia darent ac se uel in Tiberim proicerent.*

<sup>111</sup> Stressed by Bodel 1999.

<sup>112</sup> Fless 2004:50.

<sup>113</sup> See Bodel 1999:271, for the Augustan attempt of monopolization of this ritual as well.

<sup>114</sup> See Flory 1993: *passim*.



and even gods was claimed, but not always believed.<sup>115</sup> But that was where the centre of interest lay. The documentation of such detailed constructions and claims was better left to historiography than reliefs.

### 8. *Statues and Immortality*

In the course of this paper, two important Roman rituals which supposedly featured magical or, rather, anachronistic religious elements, have emerged as historical creations that reflect forms of public honouring which were newly introduced at the end of the fourth century and involved the setting up of terracotta, and, soon afterwards, bronze statues in public space.<sup>116</sup> Why, however, were statues so important as to attract such a degree of ritualization?

We do not know anything about Roman attitudes in the fourth century BC to images of deities. As the Romans shared the combination of temple and cult image, the combination of sacrifices at an altar outside and presentation of food inside a temple, in front of a cult statue, and as they shared the cultivation of sanctuaries, altars and sacred groves with many Mediterranean cultures, we could presuppose that their attitude towards images did not differ *in principle* from what we know about Greek attitudes. Those were far ranging and varying according to situation. The identification of image and deity in the address of a statue probably coexisted with a clear conception of statues as human artefacts.<sup>117</sup> An analogous ambivalence applied to statuary representations of humans. In his discourse about statues in his speeches against Verres, Cicero credited contemporary Greeks with the sentiment that statues of humans had a divine dimension.<sup>118</sup> Unlike Cicero, we have no rea-

---

<sup>115</sup> See Hölkeskamp 1996:322 for examples, such as Cic. *Brut.* 62; Liv. 4.16.4.

<sup>116</sup> See in general Hölscher 1990 and Bonfante 1978 for the crucial role of the fourth century in developing local sepulchral practices.

<sup>117</sup> Gordon 1979; Scheer 2000; especially for Rome, Rüpke 2004:78–82.

<sup>118</sup> Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.158: *Non crederem hoc de statu is nisi iacentis reuulsasque*

son not to extend this notion to the Romans as well, of the first no less than of the fourth century, even if they attempted to maintain the differences.<sup>119</sup> As I said above, having a bronze statue set up in a public space was as close to immortality as a mortal could get during lifetime.<sup>120</sup> Peter Stewart has recently shown that images on tombstones frequently depict statues or busts of the deceased, not the persons proper.<sup>121</sup> Statues embodied social eternity. Thus, the preoccupation, even obsession with a statue is understandable.

Honorific statues were more than “Symbole nobilitären Standesbewußtseins,” symbols of self-esteem of the nobility.<sup>122</sup> The mechanisms involved continued into and throughout the Principate, they were part of a history that led to (and survived) Byzantine iconoclasm. The development of the triumph under Augustus offers a splendid illustration. The first *princeps* monopolized the triumph for the emperor and members of the imperial family.<sup>123</sup> A similar development can be detected as regards the *pompae funebres*, which acquired a new orientation directed towards the imperial household.<sup>124</sup> In both cases, the emperor put his stamp on large theatrical rituals.<sup>125</sup>

---

*uidissem, propterea quod apud omnis Graecos hic mos est, ut honorem hominibus habitum in monumentis eius modi non nulla religione deorum consecrari arbitrentur.*

<sup>119</sup> See Gregory 1994:98–99; Stewart 2003:31–33. Orlin’s characterization (1997:71–72) of statues as a non-religious alternative to victory rituals is misleading.

<sup>120</sup> See Tanner 2000 and Niquet 2000:77 for many literary and epigraphic instances connecting the honour of a statue with notions of eternity. Texts would offer even more possibilities (see Feldherr 2000), but they would not be as accessible to the general public as poets usually supposed.

<sup>121</sup> Stewart 2003:92, 102.

<sup>122</sup> Thus Sehlmeier 1999:278–84.

<sup>123</sup> Barini 1952; Rüpke 1990:208, 234.

<sup>124</sup> Lahusen 1985:267 with an argument *e silentio* that has to be modified on the basis of the *Senatusconsultum de Cn. Pisone patre*; Bodel 1999:271.

<sup>125</sup> For the many dramatic elements of the complex funeral ritual see Arce 1999:331, following Scheid 1984. Hickson 1991:129–30 showed the triumph to be an indicator of possible successors.

Augustus, however, did not triumph after establishing his monopoly. The permanence of the victorious power, its felicity, could no longer be adequately expressed by setting up new statues among the mass of existing ones. For the use of an inflationary medium, the context was decisive: At least for Rome, small statuettes of Augustus between *genii* or *lares* were more important than another life-size statue in the Forum.<sup>126</sup> Triumphal practices were concentrated on the new temple of Mars Ultor, where triumphal imagery abounded.<sup>127</sup> In the long run, the triumph lost its processional character and was concentrated in the circus.<sup>128</sup> Coins and the inscriptional copies of the *Res gestae* demonstrate the importance of representation in other media from Augustus onwards.

The meaning of the triumph changed. In his *Res gestae*, Augustus described himself as having triumphed *ovans*, thus defining an important alternative to the triumph, the *ovatio*, as a mere variant.<sup>129</sup> The triumph had become an urban form of control of the appropriation of victory, rivalling the monumental *tropaia* built in the provinces.<sup>130</sup> The monopoly on victory implied a monopoly on triumphs. Even the most prestigious statues had to be set up without preceding processions. The collegial conception of rulership was reflected in the erection of groups of statues, irrespective of actual participation in a military campaign.<sup>131</sup> For their statues, the emperors could be displayed in a seated position used in the procession (on a four-wheeled vehicle, a *carpentum*).<sup>132</sup> This, however, points to remaining associations. Trajan, for instance, even cele-

---

<sup>126</sup> For the reform of the compital cult see Fraschetti 1990, esp. 331–60; Rüpke 1998.

<sup>127</sup> Hickson 1991:133–34; for details see Siebler 1988; Ganzert 1988.

<sup>128</sup> McCormick 1987:99–100.

<sup>129</sup> August. *Gest.* 4. See Itgenshorst 2004:458 for the Augustan canonization of the past.

<sup>130</sup> See Rüpke 1990:201; for the “theology of victory” see Heim 1992.

<sup>131</sup> McCormick 1987:112, 116.

<sup>132</sup> McCormick 1987:87, 90.

brated his triumph posthumously, as a statue — without obvious theological difficulties.<sup>133</sup> Constantius II entered Rome in 357 in a processional manner, immobile as a statue according to the description by Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>134</sup> Yet it was an event that took place a generation earlier that produced the account of a ritual that shows us the combination of a procession and the erection of a real statue: the erection of a statue of Constantine on the day of consecration of Constantinople, 11 May 330:

The statue in the Forum received many solemn hymns. The governor Olbianus, the *spatharii*, the *cubicularii*, and also the *silentarii*, forming an escort with white candles, all dressed in white garments, brought it raised on a carriage . . . it was revered as the Tyche of the city by all, including the army. And finally it was raised on a pillar in the presence of the priest and the procession, and everyone cried out the *Kyrie eleison* a hundred times.<sup>135</sup>

In a Christian city, *io triumpe* had to be dropped.

University of Erfurt  
Comparative Religion

JÖRG RÜPKE

P.O. Box 900 221  
99105 Erfurt, Germany  
joerg.ruepke@uni-erfurt.de

## REFERENCES

Arce, Javier

- 1999 “Los funerales romanos: problemas y perspectivas.” In Corinne Bonnet and Andre Motte, *Les Syncretismes Religieux dans le monde mediterraneen Antique*, Brussels: Brepols, 323–336.

Barini, Concetta

- 1952 *Triumphalia: Imprese ed onori militari durante l'impero romano* (Studi superiori [5]), Turin: Società editrice internazionale.

---

<sup>133</sup> *Historia Augusta*, *Hadr.* 6.3.

<sup>134</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.10.9–10; cf. Stewart 2003:112 and 152 with a direct reference to processions in general.

<sup>135</sup> *Parataseis Syntomoi Chronikai* 56, quoted after Bauer 2001:32.

Bauer, Franz Alto

- 2001 "Urban Space and Ritual: Constantinople in Late Antiquity." *Acta ad Archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 15 (ns 1):27–61.

Beard, Mary, John North, and Simon Price

- 1998 *Religions of Rome. 1: A History. 2: A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- 2003 "The Triumph of the Absurd: Roman Street Theatre." In Catherine Edwards and Greg Woolf (eds.), *Rome the Cosmopolis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 21–43.

- 2004 "Writing ritual: The triumph of Ovid." In Alessandro Barchiesi, Jörg Rüpke, and Susan Stephens (eds.), *Rituals in Ink* (Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 10), Stuttgart: Steiner, 115–126.

Belayche, Nicole

- 1995 "La neuvaine funéraire a Rome ou 'la mort impossible.'" In François Hinard (ed.), *La mort au quotidien dans le monde romain*, Paris: Boccard, 155–169.

Bernstein, Frank

- 1998 *Ludi publici: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der öffentlichen Spiele im republikanischen Rom* (Historia Einzelschriften 119), Stuttgart: Steiner.

Bianchi, Luca

- 1994 "YPO THN OPSIN: Polibio e le 'vere immagini' del funerale romano." *Aevum Antiquum* 7:137–153.

Bodel, John

- 1999 "Death on Display: Looking at Roman Funerals." In Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon (eds.), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Studies in the History of Art 56), Washington and New Haven: National Gallery of Art/Yale University Press, 259–281.

Bonfante, Larissa

- 1978 "Historical Art: Etruscan and Early Roman." *American Journal of Ancient History* 3:136–162.

Bonfante Warren, Larissa

- 1970 "Roman Triumphs and Etruscan Kings: The Changing Face of the Triumph." *Journal of Roman Studies* 60:49–66.
- 1973 "Roman Costumes: A Glossary and Some Etruscan Derivation." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* I.4:584–614.

Bremmer, Jan

- 1994 "The Soul, Death and the Afterlife in Early and Classical Greece." In J.M. Bremer et al. (eds.), *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 91–106.

Brilliant, Richard

- 1999 "Let the Trumpets Roar! The Roman Triumph." In Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon (eds.), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Studies in the History of Art 56), Washington and New Haven: National Gallery of Art/Yale University Press, 221–229.

Briquel, Dominique

- 1987 "Regards étrusques sur l'au-delà." In François Hinard (ed.), *La mort, les morts et l'au-delà dans le monde romain*, Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 263–277.

Carter, Jane Burr

- 1987 "The Masks of Ortheia." *American Journal of Archaeology* 91:355–383.

Coarelli, Filippo

- 1985 *Il Foro Romano 2: Periodo repubblicano e augusteo*. Rome: Quasar.  
1988 *Il Foro Boario: Dalle origine alla fine della repubblica*. Rome: Quasar.

Corbier, Mireille

- 1990 "Les comportements familiaux de l'aristocratie romaine (II<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.–III<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.)." In Jean Andreau and Hinnerk Bruhns (eds.), *Parenté et stratégies familiales dans l'antiquité romaines* (Collection de l'École française de Rome 129), Rome: École française, 225–249.

Deschamps, Lucienne

- 1995 "Rites funéraires de la Rome républicaine." In François Hinard (ed.), *La mort au quotidien dans le monde romain*, Paris: Bocard, 171–180.

Dondin-Payre, Monique

- 1990 "La stratégie symbolique de la parenté sous la république et l'empire romains." In Jean Andreau and Hinnerk Bruhns (eds.), *Parenté et stratégies familiales dans l'antiquité romaines* (Collection de l'École française de Rome 129), Rome: École française, 53–76.

Drerup, Heinrich

- 1980 "Totenmaske und Ahnenbild bei den Römern." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abt.* 87:81–129.

Dupont, Florence

- 1987 "Les morts et la mémoire: la masque funèbre." In François Hinard (ed.), *La mort, les morts et l'au-delà dans le monde romain*, Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 167–172.  
1994 *L'invention de la littérature: De l'ivresse grecque au livre latin*. Paris: La Découverte.

Favro, Diane

- 1994 "The Street Triumphant: The Urban Impact of Roman Triumphal Parades." In Zeynep Çelik, Diane Favro, and Richard Ingersoll (eds.), *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 151–164.

- Feldherr, Andrew  
 2000 "Non inter nota sepulcra: Catullus 101 and Roman Funerary Ritual." *Classical Antiquity* 19:209–231.
- Fless, Friederike  
 2004 "Römische Prozessionen." *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum*, Los Angeles: Paul Getty Museum, 1:33–58.
- Flory, Marleen B.  
 1993 "Livia and the History of Public Honorific Statues for Women in Rome." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123:287–308.
- Flower, Harriet I.  
 1996 *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Fraschetti, Augusto  
 1990 *Roma e il principe: Ricerche di storia urbana nell'età di Augusto e di Tiberio*. Bari: Laterza.
- Freyburger, Gérard  
 1988 "Supplication grecques et supplication romaine." *Latomus* 47:501–525.
- Frontisi-Ducroux, Françoise  
 1991 *Le Dieu-Masque: Une figure du Dionysos d'Athènes* (Images à l'appui 4), Paris: La Découverte, 213–232.
- Ganzert, Joachim  
 1988 "Der Mars-Ulter-Tempel auf dem Augustusforum in Rom: Ein Bericht über die laufenden Bauforschungsarbeiten und Beitrag zur Sakralbau-Entwicklung." *Antike Welt* 19:36–59.
- Gordon, Richard L.  
 1979 "The Real and the Imaginary: Production and Religion in the Graeco-Roman World." *Art History* 2:5–34.
- Gregory, Andrew P.  
 1994 "'Powerful images': Responses to Portraits and the Political Uses of Images in Rome." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7:80–99.
- Grimes, Ronald  
 1995 "Masking." In id. *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 78–89.
- Gruen, Erich S.  
 1992 *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 52), Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.  
 1996 "The Roman Oligarchy: Image and Perception." In Jerzy Linderski (ed.), *Imperium sine fine: T. Robert S. Broughton and the Roman Republic* (Historia Einzelschriften 105), Stuttgart: Steiner, 215–234.

Hackl, Ursula

- 1982 *Senat und Magistratur in Rom von der Mitte des 2. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. bis zur Diktatur Sullas* (Regensburger historische Forschungen 9), Kallmünz: Laibleben.

Halkin, Léon

- 1953 *La supplication d'action de grâces chez les Romains* (Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 128), Paris: Belles Lettres.

Harris, W[illiam] V.

- 1990 "On Defining the Political Culture of the Roman Republic: Some Comments on Rosenstein, Williamson, and North." *Classical Philology* 85:288–293 (responses: 294–298).

Heim, François

- 1992 *La théologie de la victoire de Constantin à Théodose* (Théologie historique 89), Paris: Beauchesne.

Hesberg, Henner von

- 1989 "Temporäre Bilder oder die Grenzen der Kunst." *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 104:61–82.

Hickson, Frances V.

- 1991 "Augustus Triumphator: Manipulation of the Triumphal Theme in the Political Program of Augustus." *Latomus* 50:124–138.

Hickson-Hahn, Frances

- 2000 "Pompey's Supplicatio Duplicata: A Novel Form of Thanksgiving." *Phoenix* 54:244–254.

Hölkeskamp, Karl Joachim

- 1987 *Die Entstehung der Nobilität: Studien zur sozialen und politischen Geschichte der Römischen Republik im 4. Jhdt. v. Chr.* Stuttgart: Steiner.
- 1993 "Conquest, Competition and Consensus: Roman Expansion in Italy and the Rise of the Nobilitas." *Historia* 42:12–39.
- 1994 "[Rev.] N.S. Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi*. . ." *Gnomon* 66:332–341.
- 1996 "Exempla und mos maiorum: Überlegungen zum kollektiven Gedächtnis der Nobilität." In Hans-Joachim Gehrke and Astrid Möller (eds.), *Vergangenheit und Lebenswelt: Soziale Kommunikation, Traditionsbildung und historisches Bewußtsein* (ScriptOralia 90), Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag, 301–338.
- 2000 "Fides — deditio in fidem — dextra data et accepta: Recht, Religion und Ritual in Rom." In Christer Bruun (ed.), *The Roman Middle Republic: Politics, Religion, and Historiography c. 400–133 B.C.* (Acta Instituti Finlandiae 23), Rome: Institutum Romanum, 223–250.



Hölscher, Tonio

- 1978 "Die Anfänge römischer Repräsentationskunst." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Rom* 85:315–357.
- 1990 "Römische Nobiles und hellenistische Herrscher." In *Akten des XIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Klassische Archäologie*, Mainz: Zabern, 73–84.
- 2001 "Die Alten vor Augen: Politische Denkmäler und öffentliches Gedächtnis im republikanischen Rom." In Gert Melville (ed.), *Institutionalität und Symbolisierung: Verfestigungen kultureller Ordnungsmuster in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Cologne: Böhlau, 183–211.

Holliday, Peter J.

- 2002 *The Origins of Roman Historical Commemoration in the Visual Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Itgenshorst, Tanja

- 2004 "Augustus und der republikanische Triumph: Triumphalfasten und summi viri-Galerie als Instrumente der imperialen Machtsicherung." *Hermes* 132:436–458.
- 2005 *Tota illa pompa: Der Triumph in der römischen Republik* (Hypomnemata 161), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Kierdorf, Wilhelm

- 1991 "Totenehrung im republikanischen Rom." In Gerhard Binder and Bernd Effe (eds.), *Tod und Jenseits im Altertum* (Bochumer Altertumswissenschaftliches Colloquium 6), Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 71–87.

Köves-Zulauf, Thomas

- 1972 *Reden und Schweigen: Römische Religion bei Plinius Maior* (Studia et Testimonia antiqua 12), Munich: Fink.

Künzl, Ernst

- 1988 *Der römische Triumph: Siegesfeiern im antiken Rom*. Munich: Beck.

Lahusen, Goetz

- 1983 *Untersuchungen zur Ehrenstatue in Rom: Literarische und epigraphische Zeugnisse* (Archaeologica 35), Rome: Bretschneider.
- 1985 "Zur Funktion und Rezeption des römischen Ahnenbildes." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abt.* 92:261–289.
- 1999 "Zu römischen Statuen und Bildnissen aus Gold und Silber." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 128:251–266.

Lapatin, Kenneth D.

- 2001 *Chryselephantine Statuary in the Ancient Mediterranean World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maria, Sandro de

- 1988 *Gli archi onorari di Roma e dell'Italia romana* (Biblioteca archeologica 7), Rome: Bretschneider.

McCormick, Michael

- 1987 *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meadows, Andrew, and Jonathan Williams

- 2001 "Moneta and the Monuments: Coinage and Politics in Republican Rome." *Journal of Roman Studies* 91:27–49.

Meuli, Karl

- 1955 "Altrömischer Maskenbrauch." *Museum Helveticum* 12:206–235.

Nickbakht, Mehran A.

- 2005 "Zur ovatio des jüngeren Drusus in den Fasti Ostienses und Fasti Amiterni." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 153:264–66.

Niquet, Heike

- 2000 *Monumenta virtutum titulique: Senatorische Selbstdarstellung im spätantiken Rom im Spiegel der epigraphischen Denkmäler* (Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 34), Stuttgart: Steiner.

North, John [A.]

- 1990 "Politics and Aristocracy in the Roman Republic." *Classical Philology* 85:277–287.

Östenberg, Ida

- 2003 *Staging the World: Rome and the Other in the Triumphal Procession*. Diss. Lund.

Orlin, Eric M.

- 1997 *Temples, Religion and Politics in the Roman Republic* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 164), Leiden: Brill.

Pietilä-Castrén, Leena

- 1987 *Magnificentia publica: The Victory Monuments of the Roman Generals in the Era of the Punic Wars* (*Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 84), Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica.

Plattus, Alan

- 1983 "Passages into the City: The Interpretive Function of the Roman Triumph." *Princeton Journal* 1:91–115.

Rice, E.E.

- 1983 *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rich, J.W.

- 1976 *Declaring War in the Roman Republic in the Period of Transmarine Expansion* (*Collection Latomus* 149), Brussels: Latomus.

Rosenstein, Nathan

- 1990a *Imperatores victi: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- 1990b "War, Failure, and Aristocratic Competition." *Classical Philology* 85:255–265.
- RRC  
Michael Crawford. *Roman Republican Coinage*. Cambridge 1974.
- Rüpke, Jörg  
1990 *Domi militiae: Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom*. Stuttgart: Steiner.  
1994 "Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom." In Hans Wißmann (ed.), *Krieg und Religion*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 55–78.  
1995 "Wege zum Töten, Wege zum Ruhm: Krieg in der römischen Republik." In Heinrich von Stietencron and Jörg Rüpke (eds.), *Töten im Krieg* (Schriften des Instituts für Historische Anthropologie 6), Freiburg: Alber, 213–240.  
1998 "Les archives des petits collèges: Le cas des vicomagistri." In *La mémoire perdue: Recherches sur l'administration romaine* (Collection de l'École française de Rome 243), Rome: École française de Rome, 27–44.  
2004 *La religione dei Romani*. Trans. Umberto Gandini. Torino: Einaudi. [German Munich 2001.]
- Scheer, Tanja S[usanne]  
2000 *Die Gottheit und ihr Bild: Untersuchungen zur Funktion griechischer Kultbilder in Religion und Politik* (Zetemata 105), Munich: Beck.
- Scheid, John  
1984 "'Contraria facere': Renversements et déplacements dans les rites funéraires." *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale, Archeologia e storia antica* 6:117–139.  
2004 *Quand faire est croire*. Paris: Belles Lettres.
- Sehlmeyer, Markus  
1999 *Stadtrömische Ehrenstatuen der republikanischen Zeit: Historizität und Kontext von Symbolen nobilitären Standesbewusstseins* (Historia Einzelschriften 130), Stuttgart: Steiner.  
2000 "Die kommunikative Leistung römischer Ehrenstatuen." In M. Braun, H. Haltenhoff, and F.H. Mutschler (eds.), *Moribus antiquis res stat Romana: Römische Werte und römische Literatur im 3. und 2. Jh. v. Chr.* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 134), Munich/Leipzig: Saur, 271–284.
- Siebler, Michael  
1988 *Studien zum augusteischen Mars Ultor* (Münchener Arbeiten zur Kunstgeschichte und Archäologie 1), Munich: Editio Maris.
- Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane  
1995 "Reading" *Greek Death: To the End of the Classical Period*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Stewart, Peter

- 2003 *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tanner, Jeremy

- 2000 "Portraits, Power, and Patronage in the Late Roman Republic." *Journal of Roman Studies* 90:18–50.

Toynbee, J[ocelyn] M[ary] C[atherine]

- 1971 *Death and Burial in the Roman World*. [London]: Thames & Hudson. [Repr. 1996.]

Varner, Eric R.

- 2004 *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture*. Leiden: Brill.

Versnel, H[enrik] S[imon]

- 1970 *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph*. Leiden: Brill.

Waldner, Katharina

- 2000 *Geburt und Hochzeit des Kriegers: Geschlechterdifferenz und Initiation in Mythos und Ritual der griechischen Polis* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 46), Berlin: de Gruyter.

Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew

- 1990 "Roman Arches and Greek Honours: The Language of Power at Rome." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 36:143–181.

Weinstock, Stefan

- 1937 "Römische Reiterparade." *Studie e materiali di storia delle religioni* 13: 10–24.

Wissowa, Georg

- 1912 *Religion und Kultus der Römer*. 2nd ed. (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 5.4), Munich: Beck.

Wunderlich, Eva

- 1925 *Die Bedeutung der roten Farbe im Kultus der Griechen und Römer: Erläutert mit Berücksichtigung entsprechender Bräuche bei anderen Völkern* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 20.1), Giessen: Töpelmann.

Ziolkowski, Adam

- 1992 *The Temples of Mid-Republican Rome and their Historical and Topographical Context* (Saggi di Storia antica 4), Rome: Bretschneider.

RED (HERRING?)  
COMMENTS ON A NEW THEORY  
CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF THE TRIUMPH\*

H.S. VERSNEL

*Summary*

In this paper it is argued that Jörg Rüpke's proposal to date the creation of the Roman triumph to the late 4th century BC cannot be accepted. First, it is demonstrated that some of R.'s reinterpretations of the triumphal phenomenology are debatable, others improbable or inconceivable, one (the most essential) impossible. Next, a few historical implications of the new theory are shown to evoke serious questions and objections. Finally, the four major historical arguments or premises on which the theory is founded are shown to be at variance with the available evidence. Consequently, there is no reason to reject the well-founded and practically unanimously accepted idea that the triumph was introduced in the "Etruscan period" of Rome (late 6th century BC).

*Introduction*

In 2002 Jörg Rüpke (henceforth R.) sent me a first draft of a paper in which he proposed a new theory concerning the origin of the triumph, with a request for comment and criticism. I replied with a number of critical notes and suggestions, adding that the theory, however ingenious, in my view was untenable for reasons as implied in my criticism. In 2003 I received a slightly revised version. In March 2006 the editors of *Numen*, unaware of this pre-history of my earlier involvement, submitted to me what turned out to be the third version of R.'s paper, with the invitation to judge it

---

\* I wish to express my deep gratitude to Barbara Nevling Porter, who, not for the first time, was so kind as to thoroughly scrutinize my text and thus save it from numerous barbarisms and errors. Many thanks, too, to Einar Thomassen for his editorial efforts.

for publication in their journal. I soon found out that, despite a few alterations or rephrasings no doubt inspired by the many discussions acknowledged in the first foot-note, the theory and the arguments on which it was based had not undergone significant changes.

Although I had to confess to *Numen* editor Einar Thomassen that this last draft gave me little cause for modifying my earlier judgment, I did grant him that “interesting theses often deserve to be published even if they will not convince everybody.” *A fortiori*, I would add, since the theory in an oral version had now been promulgated far and wide among academic audiences around the world.<sup>1</sup> Under the circumstances we agreed on what seemed to be the most expedient course of action: The so far anonymous referee would now drop his mask and this time make his critical notes public in a more orderly form and thus stimulate further discussion.

I have restricted my comments to the issue of the triumph, both because this is the major and most revolutionary part of the new theory and because my own book *Triumphus* of 1970 claims pride of place in R.’s criticism of the old theory.<sup>2</sup> Although, consequently, it will not be possible to avoid referring to my own earlier

---

<sup>1</sup> There are even references, both praising and critical, to this unpublished paper in Itgenshorst 2005:37–39, 209–10. On her wavering assessment see below.

<sup>2</sup> In his first version R. explained that this was because so far *Triumphus* “was one of my most compelling readings when I started to work on religion of the Roman republic. . . . The obvious had never been seen and now was demonstrated to utmost clarity. I was entirely convinced.” This is perhaps the right moment to elucidate at least one reason for the very divergent reactions to my dissertation. Although, in line with Rüpke’s earlier appreciation, the book has been lauded with predicates such as “liber certus in re incerta” (J. Linderski), “magnifico libro” (F. Zevi), “importante opera” (G. Amioti) and has been accepted in its main theses by various specialists (see below, n. 7), it does not play a role of any importance in a more recent trend of, especially German, studies on the Roman triumph. The reason is perfectly summarized by Beard 2003:28, when she describes the book as: “the now classic, if misleadingly entitled *Triumphus, an inquiry into the origin, development and meaning of the Roman triumph*.” Indeed, among all ill-advised titles of my publications this is easily the most deplorable misnomer. Beard: “Misleading, because it doesn’t actually like poking its nose

arguments,<sup>3</sup> I must emphasize that, practically without exception, R.'s targets are views and interpretations that are, if not universal, at least shared by many other scholars, both before and after my own book. Hence, it is not my objective to defend my own view of the origin of the triumph here, but, more generally, to show that the new theory of a 4th century origin is, if possible at all, far less probable than the practically universal idea that the triumph was an Etruscan ceremony introduced during Rome's "Etruscan period" in the late 6th century BC.

R. proposes a new theory on the origin of the triumph. The triumphator with his red colour must be viewed as a "frozen" statue by analogy with and after the model of the honorific statues that, erected on private initiative, began to mushroom in the public domain of the late 4th century. The triumph was a deliberate creation by the senate in order to concentrate public prestige in a ritual and thus to control private aspirations to statuary honorification. I quote here R.'s own introductory summary because it displays several elements that will return in my comments:

This article offers a new hypothesis to understand the form and the significance of both rituals [viz. triumph and ancestor masks], by relating them to the practice of erecting honorific statues. The hypothesis is not supported by direct ancient evidence. Yet it better explains and historically contextualizes more of the odd features of the rituals (in particular the triumph) than previous attempts to understand them. The basic thesis is that by the

---

much beyond the sixth century B.C.E." And so it is. The addition of the word "early" before "development" in the title would have prevented much uproar. Anyway, a book on the origins of the triumph in the regal period need not have much impact on studies in the political, social and ritual functions of the triumph in the middle Republic, like, for instance, the recent book of Itgenshorst 2005. It is less easy to understand why in the latter book discussions on the origin and meaning of the red colour and the *ornatus Iovis*, as well as on the name *triumphus*, are conspicuously lacking, especially when, exceptionally, she does ventilate a suggestion on the origin of the triumph (see below, n. 51).

<sup>3</sup> I will refer to my own book as Versnel 1970, for full evidence and a more detailed treatment of what I am currently arguing.

fourth century BC the display of private statues in public space — not so much in view of the sheer quantity but because of the associations such statues evoked — was seen as a threat to the capacity of the nobility to regulate its internal competition. (254)

The guiding principle of my critique will be a continuous awareness that, in order to convince, the new theory must satisfy (at least) two non-negotiable conditions. The first is that *every* testimony that suggests, or *any* interpretation that implies an early origin of the Roman triumph (irrespective of its possible meaning) must be explained away. The second is that the same ancient testimonies that so far have always been adduced to support the idea of an early introduction of the triumph, must be re-interpreted and assigned a new function in the context of the new theory. Fulfilment of the latter condition may additionally entail a very welcome support to the new hypothesis, which, as the author with praiseworthy frankness admits, “is not supported by direct ancient evidence.” Here, indeed, one basic complication is reduced to its kernel: the current, traditional theory can boast a variety of direct and explicit ancient testimonia (irrespective of their relevance or meaning). Naturally, many aspects of their interpretation remain hypothetical. On the contrary, however, the new theory has not one *direct* ancient testimony to build on: it itself is a hypothesis. Nothing against hypotheses, but it would be useful to keep these conditions in mind.

Space does not allow me to discuss once more in detail all possible objections against parts of ancient evidence usually adduced for the reconstruction of the early Roman triumph. R. is not the first scholar who has advanced a series of critical notes on this issue. Long before him Wallisch 1954/55,<sup>4</sup> to mention only one example, argued for an origin of the triumph in the third century BC as an imitation of the great Hellenistic processions like that of

---

<sup>4</sup> This article is not mentioned by R. although of all earlier theories it is closest to his own. My objections to it (Versnel 1970:15, 50) also hold for R.’s new hypothesis.



Ptolemy II Philadelphos somewhere in the period 279–275 BC. Nor was the present writer the first and only scholar to collect the main evidence and arguments in favour of an early triumph. Far from it. Once more I must emphasize that most of R.'s counterarguments are levelled against an, in its central point, universally accepted theory and the evidence adduced to support it. I also must point out that not one of his objections as advanced by earlier scholars has been left undiscussed in my book and in many other publications by different authors. Sometimes I found myself wondering why R. raises well-worn objections as if they were new instead of explaining why earlier arguments and counter arguments fail to convince him. We will first pay attention to the phenomenological characteristics of the triumph and the triumphator, and next to the historical setting of the new theory.

### I. *The Phenomenology of Triumph and Triumphator*

#### A. Costume and Paraphernalia of the Triumphator

I will try to kill two birds with one stone by, whenever possible and expedient, juxtaposing R.'s arguments against traditional interpretations of ritual elements on the one hand, and R.'s own attribution of the same elements to his "new" triumph on the other. The first four of these elements are connected with his discussion of the *ludi Romani* and their alleged connection with the triumph. The idea that the *pompa circensis* and the triumph belong in some way together is one of the universals in the discussion of the triumph. With an influential paper of 1859 Th. Mommsen initiated the scholarly discussion on this subject and ever since the discussion has been focussed not so much on the question of *whether*, as on *the way in which* the two cohere. For full evidence and my own interpretation of this issue I refer to Versnel 1970, chapters 3 and 7. As R. correctly writes, the idea of the coherence of triumph and *ludi* is mainly — but not solely — grounded on the attribution of the *ornatus Iovis* and some other paraphernalia to both the tri-

umphator and the leading magistrate of the *ludi circenses*. The *ornatus Iovis* consists of the *toga purpurea* and *tunica palmata*; the other insignia are the so-called *corona etrusca*, a gold crown too big to be worn on the head and hence held by a slave instead, and the scepter with the eagle on top. The *currus triumphalis*, too, has a place in this discussion.

To be convincing, R.'s new hypothesis needs must challenge and refute two general assumptions: first, the assumption of an ancient interconnection between the triumph and the *ludi Romani*, and, secondly, the idea that the triumphator in whatever manner would represent Jupiter during the ceremony. The first idea would imply that the introduction of the triumph must be ascribed to the same early period as the *ludi*, which beyond doubt are to be dated to the archaic period of Rome. The second, apart from being inconceivable for a ceremony deliberately created for a victorious general in the late 4th century BC, would destroy the kernel of his own theory.

Before going into detail I will first pay attention to a few more general attempts of R. to cope with these two obstacles. An original connection between triumph and *ludi Romani*, though commonly accepted, cannot be proven. That the two were introduced in Rome by the last generation of kings, an Etruscan dynasty, is generally accepted. Here it is necessary to briefly summarize my own explanation for their relationship. In contrast to the suggestions of Mommsen and others, I have proposed that originally the *ludi* were part of a New Year festival. In Rome, the Ides (13th) of September was the day of the Roman *ludi circenses* with the *pompa deorum*, the procession of the gods, led by the king. It was also the day of the founding of the Temple of the Trias Capitolina, on which annually Juno and Minerva were invited to the *epulum Iovis* (the dinner of Jupiter)<sup>5</sup> to which, as I proposed, other gods from the *pompa* were also invited. In Etruria, September 13th was,

---

<sup>5</sup> Val. Max. 2.1.2: *Iovis epulo ipse in lectulum Iuno et Minerva in sellas ad cenam invitabantur.*

as we know, the day of the early enthronization of the central “king” (*praetor Etruriae*). I also proposed that at this day the king played/represented/embodied the highest god (as indicated at Rome by the *ornatus Iovis* and other paraphernalia). This Etruscan New Year festival was introduced in Rome in the period of the Etruscan kings, where it preserved its New Year character.<sup>6</sup> Coarelli (1988: 414–37) not only “accepts my basic argument” (thus R. in his footnote 20), but closely follows the chain of arguments for my entire thesis in his interpretation of the triumph (including its Near-Eastern cradle).<sup>7</sup> More importantly, however, he adduced more recent evidence and additional arguments which add strong further support to my theory. *Inter alia* he showed that the Pyrgi tablets found in the 1960s exactly present a local Etruscan king in the role of a god during a sacred marriage.<sup>8</sup>

In my view, the Etruscan precursor of the triumph, the ceremonious procession of a victorious general, was built on this scheme

---

<sup>6</sup> An important argument is also that both festivals, the Etruscan and the Roman, were marked by the so-called *clavi fixatio*, the driving in of a nail (in Rome in the wall of the temple on the Capitoline), indicating that a new period had begun.

<sup>7</sup> More selectively, and from a different perspective, cf. Ampolo 1987:86–87; Zevi 1995:312–13. Recently, Amiotti 2001, too, accepts my argument on the Etruscan origin of the Roman triumph in view of both its name and its phenomenology, without adding new insights. She emphasizes the amalgamation of Greek and Etruscan elements, but is unaware of — at least does not mention — the works of Coarelli, Ampolo and Zevi, the latter of whom had argued exactly the same, but in far greater detail. As to supposed connections with Asia Minor ritual, Beekes 2003 recently demonstrated with an abundance of powerful, partially new arguments that the Etruscans stemmed from Asia Minor, more precisely from the North-East: Phrygia Hellespontica and Bithynia. My discussion on the origin of the triumph is one of his many arguments.

<sup>8</sup> Although found in the early sixties, these tablets had not been accorded their immense importance at the time when I wrote my *Triumphus*. Important, too, is the role of Hercules at the Forum Boarium in connection with the triumph, as noted by Coarelli and the studies mentioned in the preceding note, especially Ampolo 1987.

and also included the king in the role of the highest god, not as an annual ritual occurrence like the *ludi*, but as a, by its nature, irregular and incidental ceremony. As such it developed its own specific traits. This means that, like others, I had to take notice of the differences between the two ceremonies, on which R. rightly and understandably focuses his attention. Of course the leader of the games was “neither victorious nor . . . permanently honoured,” in the words of R. (258), and indeed, the cheer *triumpe* was reserved for the triumph. In Versnel 1970:301, I argued that these few differences alongside the more obvious similarities between the two ceremonies should be explained as the result of a historical evolution: the leader in the triumph easily came to exceed the leading consul in the *ludi* in importance, glory and prestige. As a consequence, some elements originally shared by both ceremonies may have gradually been reserved for the more important one alone.<sup>9</sup> Mommsen explained the differences in another manner, others again differently. Scholars may of course differ of opinion, for here we are in the domain of “debatables,” but one may not pass over in silence the great variety of answers that have previously been proposed and thus create the impression that the question has never been asked before.

The same is true for R.’s (rhetorical) question concerning another obstacle: “. . . why should [Jupiter] appear twice” (i.e., in the *pompa circensis*, once in the form of a statue, once in the person of the magistrate) (258)? This is one of his attempts to acquit himself of his second task: to discard Jupiter as a model of both

---

<sup>9</sup> With respect to the triumphal cheer, I wrote (Versnel 1970:301): “I consider it probable that the meaning of cry of victory which as we saw was discernible from the outset, became increasingly predominant, with the result that the original meaning became gradually obsolete, and the cry no longer fitted in with a ceremony which at first sight had nothing to do with a victory. A similar but less radical, development may be observed in the verb *ovare*. Our cry ‘hurray, hurray’ has also completely lost its original meaning of ‘hurry’ and has turned into a shout of joy.”

triumphator and leader of the *ludi*. However, this question, too, has been brought forward long ago. One indeed would expect objections of this type in the early 20th century, when scholars found this double identity “impossible” and “undenkbar” (Versnel 1970:69), rather than in the early 21st. It fits the rationalistic mentality of earlier generations of scholars who, in their “separative cosmology,” might ask questions and raise objections that ancient men could not have dreamt of in their “interconnected” philosophy.<sup>10</sup> We should have learned by now not to colonize ancient and non-western cultures with our own paradigms. In order to avoid just that, I presented in Versnel 1970:68–70 a small dossier of similar simultaneous double identities in ancient ritual. Did the (some) Athenians refuse to believe that Athena, impersonated by a tall beautiful woman, personally brought Peisistratos back because they were aware that there was already a statue of the same goddess on the Acropolis? Not if we may believe Herodotus 1.60.3. Did, more generally, people refuse to believe in the epiphany of a god in (the vicinity of) his/her temple because his/her statue was already present in that same sanctuary? Did the onlookers at the famous procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphos worry about the fact that Dionysos figured at least four times in (different) statuary forms? It appears that what *we* find paradoxical or contradictory simply may (and does) occur in (ancient) ritual. We shall have to accept that in ritual, old and new, one plus one is not necessarily two, but may instead be twice. One of the greatest anthropologists, Maurice Bloch, writes: “The study of ritual should avoid . . . either directly or indirectly using logical forms” (Bloch 1989:42) — which, by the way, is not the same as saying that ancient ritual is a-logic or pre-logic. The theme is the centre of interest in recent studies in

---

<sup>10</sup> I borrow these concepts from Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, who assume an unbridgeable gap between the modern Western “separative cosmology,” which has no room for ambiguities, and the ancient Greek “interconnected cosmology.” For my own views on this complex see the introduction in Versnel 1990.

theatricality, the ludic, ritual performance, as, for instance, exemplified in Victor Turner's work with his concepts of double awareness and simultaneity.<sup>11</sup>

John Scheid, who fully accepts my interpretation of the triumphator, discusses just this doubleness of the divine cult statue and its mirroring by the triumphator, taking his departure from Vernant's notion of "le double." He argues that the Roman public in the historical period was perfectly able to live with the ambiguity of the figure of the triumphator, human (as the slave reminds him) and god.<sup>12</sup> It is against such a position that R. makes a stand, with his second "no-nonsense" objection to the triumphator in the role of Jupiter:

The historical Romans did not associate the appearance and acclamation of the triumphant general with his ascent to divine status, to say nothing of his transformation into *Iuppiter ipse*. As is well known, the Roman nobility frowned upon peers who laid claim to royal power or identified themselves with the highest god of the *res publica*. Some even got killed for doing so. In a nutshell: why did most of the triumphators survive their triumph for longer than, say, Julius Caesar did? (256–57)

There is a choice of reactions to his question. First, the one in line with Scheid's approach, namely that there are many conceivable modalities of identity, resemblance, imitation, performance. The historical Romans did not have dogmatic prescriptions at their disposal on how exactly to interpret the figure of the triumphator. One of the good things about ritual is that every person attending the ceremony could cherish his own interpretation. Another line of approach would be to note that ancient rituals might well preserve elements into a later period in which their original meaning had become unacceptable. They were only maintained *because* they belonged to a traditional ritual (and, accordingly, had lost their threat).<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Turner 1988:25, 169. For a general survey see Droogers 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Scheid 1986:221–223, esp. 222: "Les historiens de Rome n'ont pas hésité. Pour la majorité d'entre eux, le triomphateur était l'image vivante de Jupiter. . . ." Cf. also Scheid 1993:82–84, on which Beard 2003:27–28.

<sup>13</sup> This is very well expressed by Beard, North and Price 1998:60: "It seems

It would be quite another thing to *create* a new ceremony in the fourth century that was marked by such politically unacceptable honours. This (im)possibility, however, is introduced as a corollary of R.'s own theory. Worse, this argument undercuts the kernel of his own theory, viz. that the newly created triumphator was awarded a *regal* outfit (as quoted below), which, in the passage just quoted, R. had rejected for being just as unacceptable as identification with the highest god.

Ironically enough, however, I myself had already given a third answer in my *Triumphus*. I explicitly argued that the triumph, in its well-known form, cannot possibly have originated in pre-Etruscan Rome, for the explicit reason that "the representation of divine beings by humans was unacceptable to the Romans,"<sup>14</sup> and that consequently the triumphator in his role of Jupiter is one of the many arguments for tracing the origin of the triumph to Etruria. I extensively argued that, once introduced in Rome by the Etruscan monarchy in the late 6th century, in close association with the Capitoline temple and the image of Jupiter, the ceremony had become a major emblem of identity of the Roman state, but not with the same (Etruscan) connotations. I devoted a whole chapter (Versnel 1970, ch. 8), to the thesis "that the Etruscan triumph, once it had been introduced into Rome, underwent a fundamental change of meaning." So, different from R.'s expectations of me, I heartily

---

comprehensible only on the assumption that what is now thought of as *royal* ceremonial was perceived by the Romans, first and foremost, as *Roman*, certainly not as an arbitrary imposition on them — whether monarchical or Etruscan." Even more to the point Rüpke himself in his pre-statuesque period (1990:224): "Wie das Beispiel des Camillus zeigt, war diese Nähe von Triumphator und Iuppiter ein religiöses Problem für die Römer, doch ein zu zentrales Element der tradierten rituellen Struktur, um es entsprechend seiner religiösen Bedeutung zu unterdrücken." Cf. *ibidem* 233.

<sup>14</sup> Versnel 1970:88–93, esp. 89. R. acknowledges that I "admit" this (his note 21), but does not acknowledge that I have devoted an ample discussion to this issue with the conclusion as phrased in the text above.

agree with him that the Romans of the fourth century did not (necessarily) see an embodiment of Jupiter in the triumphator,<sup>15</sup> although I do agree with Scheid that the triumphator might evoke the image of the supreme Roman God.<sup>16</sup> The question that remains, however, and which we shall have to investigate in more detail later on, is whether they *did* see a terracotta statue in the frozen triumphator.

Once Jupiter has been disposed of in more general terms, the *ornatus Iovis* of the two protagonists becomes a burning problem. In his explanation of this costume of the triumphator R. follows some earlier scholars:

The easiest way to interpret the costume is to see it as temporarily distinguishing an outstanding, extraordinary magistrate by means of regal symbols that, in other ritual contexts, were also used to honour Jupiter. (259)<sup>17</sup>

Questions not touched upon by R. but in my view essential and detrimental to his proposition here (all amply discussed in Versnel 1970, ch. 2, and by many others) include: 1) if the insignia under discussion in the two ceremonies must be detached from Jupiter, why then were the *toga purpurea* and *tunica palmata* consistently referred to in historical texts as *ornatus Iovis*; *Iovis optimi maximi ornatus*; *tunica Iovis*?<sup>18</sup> 2) How could later authors have conceived an identification of Jupiter's costume with that of the triumphator

---

<sup>15</sup> But not on the ground that they knew the "real" Jupiter better from the statue that was paraded during processions and hence could not confuse the triumphator with him, as R. writes elsewhere. Here again R. underestimates the working of theatrical performance.

<sup>16</sup> I refer to the illuminating discussion in Beard, North and Price 1998:142, with which I am in full agreement.

<sup>17</sup> I agree with this, as R. acknowledges, in so far as Jupiter must have derived his attire from the human king. But his regal attire thus became *ornatus Iovis*. And it was this *ornatus* that the leading magistrates got from Jupiter, as argued below (Versnel 1970:88–93).

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Liv. 10.7.10: *qui Iovis Optimi Maximi ornatu decoratus curru aureo urbe vectus in Capitolium ascenderit*. All testimonia in Versnel 1970:58–59.



if the triumph was created in the late 4th century and if, according to R., the triumphator at that time had a *regal* attire disposed upon him?<sup>19</sup> 3) How can Tertullian assert that triumphators “took the *toga palmata* from Jupiter” (see below)?<sup>20</sup> 4) How to explain Octavius’ dream (Suet. *Aug.* 94, which R. leaves aside) in which he saw his son

appearing in superhuman majesty armed with the thunderbolt, sceptre and the clothes (*exuviis*) of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, crowned with a radiant wreath, and riding in a belaurelled chariot drawn by twelve dazzlingly white horses.

The hyperboles, intended to evoke the image of an apotheosis, by no means alter the fact that the future Augustus is pictured as simultaneously associated with Jupiter and the triumph (*laureatus currus*).<sup>21</sup>

As to the *corona etrusca*, which according to R. was simply a “generic” (259) regal ornament and not the crown of the image of Jupiter himself, I would like to have an answer to the following questions: 1) Why then was it too big for a human head<sup>22</sup> and had hence to be held by a slave? Must we assume that such crowns of superhuman size belonged to the outfit of kings? 2) Why did

---

<sup>19</sup> The only passage in R.’s text that seems to refer to this problem is at p. 270: “The ritual dress, which originally simply denoted unsurpassable authority, was elaborated into a *tunica palmata* and a *toga picta* and was used on further occasions and in statuary representations.” It is ominously vague and sidesteps the central question.

<sup>20</sup> In Rüpke 1990:232, R. still acknowledged the importance of this fact: “Der . . . Triumphator trägt den *ornatus Iovis*, *tunica picta* und *toga palmata*, Gewänder, die im Iuppitertempel aufbewahrt wurden und außerhalb der eigentlichen Zeremonie absolut deplazierend wirkten.”

<sup>21</sup> Thus, most recently and extensively, Weber 2000:153–55 (with further literature), who also connects the whole scene with the expectation of future triumphs of Augustus. On the Jupiter association see Pollini 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Juvenal 10.39–40: *magnaeque coronae tantum orbem, quanto cervix non sufficit ulla*. This clearly refers to size, not weight, although the element weight would not affect my argument (cf. Versnel 1970:75).

Tertullian *Corona* 13.1, speaking of the *coronae etruscae* of the leaders of the *ludi*, say literally that they *took it* (together with the *toga palmata*) *from Jupiter* (*ab Iove insignes ad deducendas tensas cum palmatis togis sumunt*)? 3) How could the crown have acquired its Etruscan name if it was used for the first time for the triumphator in the late fourth century? 4) How, above all, as already mentioned above, must we imagine that the senate — in an attempt to curtail or at least downplay the unwelcome “increasingly common private practice” (263) of erecting honorific statues — “distinguished an outstanding, extraordinary magistrate by means of regal symbols” (259), which would precisely raise him above all other nobles in a, for republican Rome, politically inconceivable fashion?

I pass over the questions of the eagle sceptre and the *quadriga*. Such sceptres are indeed more generally used as insignia of kings and it is only the context that may determine its function. As for the *quadriga*, the question of whether the leading magistrate of the *ludi circenses* rode a *biga* or a *quadriga* cannot be decided with certainty on the basis of our evidence.<sup>23</sup> Nobody can prove or disprove that the *original* leader of the *ludi* (= in republican times the highest magistrate *cum imperio*) enjoyed the privilege of a *quadriga*. However, I do have a question: If, in R.’s theory, prior

---

<sup>23</sup> Fless 2004:43, uses the title “Quadriga des Spielgebers” for the relevant section, but neither her literary evidence (Juvenal 10.39–49), nor her visual material really supports this. One of the complications is that it is not always possible to distinguish between triumph or *ludi* in pictorial evidence. Another is a widespread misunderstanding among scholars about the question of who functioned as leaders of the *ludi Romani* and their *pompa* in the republican period. Scholars, including R., often think that the primacy has been taken over from the consuls by the aediles. The truth is that the *cura ludorum* (the preparation and organisation) belonged to the aediles but that the presidency was reserved for the *magistratus maiores*. Livy 30.15.12 calls the presidency an *imperii ministerium*. Further unequivocal testimonies are found in Salomonson 1956:57–60. Bernstein 1998:59–63 largely follows him, but places the emphasis on *auspiciu*m instead of *imperiu*m, in which I do not follow him. With this one of R.’s (his footnote 53) meagre “other aspects that impinge upon the question” falls flat.

to the late 4th century no ceremony existed at all in which the *quadriga* was granted to a high magistrate (neither the *ludi circenses*, nor the, till that time non-existent, triumphator), how did the senate conceive the idea of according a *quadriga* to the newly created triumphator?

Altogether, at this point our interim conclusion must be that R.'s new theory raises more problems than it solves. These problems only increase when we move on to the two elements of the triumph not yet discussed: the triumphator's red face and the name of the ceremony. Let us have a look at the last and most fiercely discussed feature of the triumphator that R. must re-interpret for his own theory. It is the one that inspired him to the construction of his new theory.

#### B. The Colour of the Triumphator

As long as there has been discussion of the triumph, the triumphator's red face (and body) has been one of its focal points. Most scholars have accepted the testimonies from antiquity such as the one quoted by R. from Pliny 33.111–12:

... that Verrius names authors who hand down that in years past on feast-days it was customary for the face of the statue of Jupiter himself to be painted with red-lead; likewise the body of triumphators ... and one of the censors' first duties is to let out the contract for painting Jupiter with red-lead.

Pliny 35.157 adds that this statue "was made of terracotta and for that reason used to be red-leaded" (*ficilem fuisse et ideo miniari solitum*), also repeated by Plutarch *QR* 98. And Serv. *Verg. Ecl.* 6.22: "... because red is the colour of the gods; hence the triumphators, too, have their face red-leaded, just as Iuppiter Capitolinus in his quadriga is red-leaded" (*quod robeus color deorum sit: unde et triumphantes facie miniata, et in Capitolio Iuppiter in quadrigis miniatus*). No text says explicitly that the triumphator took his red-lead complexion in imitation of the image of Iuppiter Capitolinus, but most scholars have inferred as much from the

juxtaposition of the two in the ancient testimonies and, of course, by analogy with the other elements borrowed from Jupiter. So have I (Versnel 1970:78–84, with discussion of the alternatives). Others, however, have seen the red colour of the triumphator as an independent expression of strength and vitality or as a symbol of the blood of the dead enemies.

The latter dilemma, however, is not of immediate importance for our issue, because R. now goes his own revolutionary and novel way. While he accepts that the red lead-paint of the triumphator is an imitation of a red-painted statue, he concludes that: “He was covered in paint in imitation, not so much of Jupiter, as of a statue in terracotta” (261). This transition from *the* statue of *Jupiter* to *a* statue in terracotta (which, too, might need an occasional brushing-up) is intended to pave the way for his central thesis. However, already at this point serious problems are looming, of which I here mention only two: we will return to the wider issue of honorific statues in the late 4th century BC later on.

The first problem concerns the ancient evidence. Although there is no reason to doubt that terracotta statues may have needed an occasional freshening up, it was, according to the ancient authors, exclusively the statue of Jupiter whose reddening was so important that it was *ritualized* into the first act of the censors. Accordingly, they, more than once, mention the red-leaded Jupiter of the Capitol and the red-leaded triumphator in one and the same breath. *If* the triumphator in the conventional picture of the Roman triumph took his red-leaded face and body to be an imitation of *a* red-leaded statue there cannot be any doubt that this statue was that of Jupiter.<sup>24</sup> But this is not what R. can use. He goes on:

---

<sup>24</sup> I do not quite understand R.’s footnote 40, on Klearchos of Herakleia 366–353. This tyrant called himself son of Zeus and had an altar. On the occasion of a victory he wore a purple robe and a gold wreath, and carried a thunderbolt. He had the golden eagle of Zeus carried ahead of him, and painted his face red (testimonia and discussion: Versnel 1970:80, 87). No text says explicitly

Being carried in a frozen pose in a chariot, with red colour applied to his body (i.e. the visible parts of his skin), he was meant to recall a terracotta statue. (261)

And here is my second problem, this time concerning R.'s own new theory. If the red colour is an imitation of contemporary honorific statues, these statues must satisfy a, once more absolute, condition: *they must have been red-faced (or red-bodied) themselves*. This implies that they must have been made of terracotta (and in that case were perhaps regularly painted). This, however, seems to be out of the question for the period under discussion. Perusing the relevant literature lavishly collected and cited by R., I did not find one author who held the opinion that honorific statues in the late fourth century (as we shall see, they were extremely few) were made of anything other than bronze, or perhaps stone. The famous bronze "Capitoline Brutus," generally dated to around 300 BC, can be taken as exemplary in this respect. Now, if there were no terracotta honorific statues around, they cannot have been imitated by a red-faced triumphator.

R. realizes that he cannot get around this fact. This becomes apparent from his attempt to solve this irritating complication, when he qualifies the red colour of the triumphator as an "impersonation of a *consciously archaic form* of terracotta statues" (261).<sup>25</sup> This means

---

that he thus imitated "the statue of a god," but at Versnel 1970:80, I did make the suggestion that, both in the case of the triumphator and Klearchos, "the red colour originally belonged to the statue of the god." So on this point R. and I seem to agree. But not on the inferences to be drawn from it. In my view this explicit borrowing of a god's paraphernalia by an autocratic ruler with the explicit purpose to "play a god" does not support but rather contradicts R.'s own hypothesis: the only other red face in the mid-fourth century is used by a person who imitates a god, not a statue of a human. A similar threat to R.'s theory can be found in the slave's monition "remember that you are a mortal being" addressed to Philip II (Ael. *VH* 8.15), who played the thirteenth god in one of his processions, also 4th century BC. Here there is no imitation of "a statue" either, but a representation of a god.

<sup>25</sup> Significant, too, are some other veiled formulations. Once he writes: "... two

that we are to believe that in the absence of contemporaneous “red” statues, the senate consciously resorted to an imitation of a type of outmoded and no longer current terracotta statue as a model for the triumphator. Note however that these *earlier* terracotta statues must have been practically reserved for deities.<sup>26</sup> One of the few still visible and very prominent terracotta statues, besides the Hercules fictilis at the Ara Maxima,<sup>27</sup> was the old terracotta statue of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, which was venerated until its destruction in 83 BC.<sup>28</sup> This, then, brings us back to exactly the same conclusion as the one with which we started: if the onlookers managed at all to recognize a (red) “stand-in terracotta statue” in the triumphator, this could not have been as a reference to *non-existent* honorific red statues of human nobles, but could only have been seen as referring to the only red statue *still available*: that of Jupiter to which the triumphator ascended also in R.’s theory. I do not think that this part of the theory needs further comment.

Small wonder, for that matter, that the — additional — emphasis on the “frozen pose” of the triumphator, is now awarded pride

---

important Roman rituals . . . have emerged as historical creations that reflect forms of public honouring which were newly introduced at the end of the fourth century and *involved the setting up of terracotta, and, soon afterwards, bronze statues* in public space” (278). Elsewhere: “. . . to represent the victor by means of a (*fictitious*) terracotta image” (264–65), though just a few lines later he admits that “bronze became the minimum standard for honorific statues.”

<sup>26</sup> Since human statues before the late fourth century *could* not exist if R.’s theory were correct and *did* not exist according to a majority of specialists. The famous statues of kings and heroes of the regal period and early Republic, too, were most likely a product of the same late fourth century. The most extensive discussion is that of Sehlmeier 1999:67–109 (summary at p. 109), who argues that the creation of statues of legendary and mythical persons was inspired by the earliest statues of living persons and must be dated to the period 320–290 BC; also cf. Sehlmeier 2000:272, with earlier literature.

<sup>27</sup> Pliny, *NH* 35.157.

<sup>28</sup> When it was replaced with an adaptation of Phidias’s chryselephantine Zeus at Olympia. See Pollini 1993:260–61.

of place in his argument. What is an obvious and natural attitude of *any* protagonist in *any pompa*, parading ceremoniously and fully aware of his ritual prominence on a *currus*, must now be awarded an *exceptional* meaningful status specifically reserved to the triumphator. For arguments for this triumphal attitude R. takes refuge in Köves-Zulauf 1972:140, who himself was in dire need of a frozen triumphator for *his* thesis that the triumphator never looked back (“nicht zurückgeblickt hat”). In support of the immovable gaze, Köves-Zulauf has found what he frankly admits to be the only literary description of the attitude of a triumphator. This turns out to be the well-known description of a triumphator in the fourth century — not BC, however, but AD, namely emperor Constantius II in 357. Such descriptions, only once attested here for a triumphator, were standard for official ceremonious performances of later Byzantine emperors, especially during their *adventus*.<sup>29</sup> There is no evidence at all that this should be taken as a specifically triumphal attitude.<sup>30</sup> The leader of the *pompa circensis* no doubt behaved in the same fashion.

---

<sup>29</sup> Charlesworth 1947; Classen 1988. Itgenshorst 2005:38 has also noticed this and considers it even the most problematic of R.’s “mehreren problematischen Annahmen.”

<sup>30</sup> Even more damaging to this testimony, however, is that Ammianus, to whom we owe this description, adds (6.10.11) that this was “affectation on his part” (*affectabat*) and that this behaviour was characteristic of Constantius II! This idiosyncratic aspect is emphasized by Classen 1988, esp. 183–84. Charlesworth 1947 proposes that “this imperial deportment was one of the many devices for accentuating the majesty and dignity of the emperor which Diocletian was alleged to have borrowed from Persian usage.” Nor is Köves’ argument that Tiberius on the Boscoreale cup displays the same attitude specifically telling for the triumph. Stewart 2003:112–17, who also discusses the late antique testimonies on Constantius II, provides a series of pictures from earlier periods in which the emperor was represented in a statuesque form. None of them has anything to do with the triumph. Quite a job, for that matter, for a triumphator to behave “frozenly” if you are accompanied in the *currus triumphalis* by a couple of your young children, as was not unusual. See Ehlers, “Triumphus,” *RE* 2. Reihe VII

## C. The Name of the Triumph

So far we have proceeded from the debatable, via the doubtful and improbable, towards what I would call “incredible” arguments. We now come to the most serious threat to the new theory: the name of the ceremony, *triumphus*. It is here that we will make the final step from incredibility toward impossibility. R. correctly summarizes my own thesis, which partly concurs with the general point of view: *triumphus* comes from the exclamation *triumpe*, with which the soldiers addressed the triumphator, as is also accepted by R. The earliest attestation of *triumpe* occurs in the archaic *carmen arvale*. This song explicitly invites Mars and other gods to approach/appear. *Triumpe*, again according to the nearly universal opinion of specialists, comes from Gr. *thriambe*, which in Greece certainly belongs to the sphere of Dionysos and in which I recognized a cultic exhortation for a god to appear who was originally from Asia Minor, just as *triumpe* functioned in the *carmen arvale*.

There is no irony involved when I express my admiration for R.’s honesty in thus summarizing my main thesis concerning the term *triumpe/thriambe*, since it implies the deathblow to his theory (as I just as frankly wrote him years ago). What R. fails to mention is one essential and irrefutable linguistic element expounded in Versnel 1970, ch. 1, namely that there is only one way in which Latin *triumpe* can have been derived from Greek *thriambe*, and that is via the Etruscan language. This is one of the basic and generally adduced arguments for the Etruscan origin of the Roman triumph. Both the linguistic and the cultural-historical aspects were and still are generally accepted, as R. acknowledges.

Let us now check R.’s theory concerning the introduction of the terms *triumpe-triumphus*. How does R. account for the origin of

---

508 for testimonia. Livy 45.40.8 mentions this for the triumph of L. Aemilius Paullus in 167 BC (who, in R.’s theory, may not have been less frozen than Constantius II, 500 years later).



the name of the victorious ceremony in the second half of the fourth century? I quote his brief (and only) relevant passage:

The name of the new ritual offers the best indicator of its focus: *triumphus* and *triumphator* derive from the exclamation *triumpe*, which, initially, must have been of mocking character, an outcry that accompanied the general standing still on his chariot, playing his own statue. We are dealing with a form of *iambízein*, which focused its satirizing thrust on the chief protagonist of the triumph, as it did in the *pompa funebris* with the important and rich deceased. The mockery of the soldiers was not “apotropaic,” but rather formed a rite of reversal (and substantial public critique) in the presence of a superior who had enjoyed the right over the life and death of his inferiors and was now confined to immobility by the rite. (268)

First, as we have discussed, we are asked to believe that the senate had created the triumphal ceremony, in order for the nobility to “channel their desire for public prestige into a ritual that involved the publicly financed impersonation of a consciously archaic form of terracotta statues” (261). All this as a state-induced antidote against an all too extravagant outburst of private statuary in the same period. This ceremony, although deliberately created by the senate, was not baptized by its creators with a ceremonious name, but had to wait for a sequence of victory celebrations in which the soldiers (suddenly? gradually?) created a new ritual of their own, namely mocking the general who now, *for the first time in history, was ridiculous* because he was frozen into a statue. For this reason they borrowed the Greek term *thriambe* and translated it into Latin. The derisive function of the cheer, finally, promoted it to the name of one of the most solemn ceremonies of the Roman state.

Both the construction as a whole and its building-blocks are so contrived, far-fetched and utterly improbable that together they should suffice to reject the theory out of hand. However, there is more: the theory *cannot* be correct. At this point, R. seems to have forgotten what he had honestly admitted before, namely that the cheer *triumpe* existed already two or three centuries prior to his date of origin of the triumph. The *carmen arvale* is, according to Mommsen, “das einzige zusammenhängende Stück, das wir besitzen

in ältestem Latein,”<sup>31</sup> and nobody disagrees.<sup>32</sup> In that very ceremonious *carmen* the cheer *triumpe*, regardless of its precise function, cannot have been a mocking cry. Nor was it in the Latin literature of a century or less after the supposed introduction of the triumph in the late 4th century, as for instance in Plautus. There simply *did not exist* a mocking *triumpe* in the Latin language. R. seems to imply that the cheer *triumpe* as a mocking cheer (cf. Greek *iambizein*), was introduced from Greece in the period in which he places the origin of the triumph. This, however, is impossible and not only because in that period nothing is known of a Greek cry *thriambe*. In historical times, *thriambos* was a song and a surname of Dionysos, but not a cry, let alone a mocking cheer. Far more importantly: it is impossible that Gr. *thriambe* could ever have ended up in the Latin language as *triumpe* without the intermediation of a third language. Gk. *-a-* in closed syllables (as here) always yields *-e-* in Latin (e.g. Gk. *talanton* > Lat. *talentum*), and Gk. *-b-* in Latin always remains *-b-* (e.g. Gk. *kubernan* > Lat. *gubernare*).<sup>33</sup> There is only one way of explaining the transition from *thriambe* to *triumpe*, namely through the Etruscan language, which according to every specialist perfectly satisfies these sound changes.<sup>34</sup> This detour, however, is unthinkable in the late fourth century and certainly does not fit R.’s theory.

---

<sup>31</sup> Mommsen 1905:275. More recently, the fifth century has been proposed as the time of its creation (Paladino 1988:266–68), which I doubt.

<sup>32</sup> Although I would not be amazed to find a scholar who argues that it is a deliberately archaizing 2nd century AD product of the *Fratres Arvales*.

<sup>33</sup> See for the few exceptions and their explanation (according to different Greek laws *not* applying to *thriambe-triumpe*): Versnel 1970:50–51.

<sup>34</sup> There, Greek *-a-* in closed syllables becomes *-u-*, and *-b-* yields *-p-*. The aspiration of the *-p-* into *-ph-* did not take place before late 2nd century BC in Latin. All the arguments and linguistic evidence is found in Versnel 1970, ch. 1, where I followed Kretschmer and other earlier specialists. The same year as my *Triumphus* appeared also saw the publication of the fundamental work of de Simone 1970, who in vol. II, pp. 275–76 once more clearly expounded the linguistic facts. Cf. also de Simone 1988; Bonfante Warren 1970. Nobody doubts this anymore.

Altogether this seems to be the final blow to the theory: there is no way whatsoever that Gk. *thriambelos* could have entered the Latin language in this period, *inter alia* because it could only have entered the Latin language as an Etruscan loan word. Nor was *triumpe* ever a mocking cry, which — quite apart from its incredibility as noted above — excludes R.' hypothesis concerning the origin of the name *triumphus* in the 4th century BC.

If R.'s theory is thus definitely invalidated by the iron laws of language, I might have ended my criticism at this point. If I nonetheless continue with a brief second section on the historical consequences and complications created by the theory of a triumph originating in the 4th century BC, it is for two reasons. First, I am aware that some scholars are reluctant to let themselves be dictated by linguistic laws. Secondly, I promised as much in my introduction. After all, perhaps the first question should have been whether the new theory would fit the historical situation of the period. As R. writes, the initial incentive for creating his new theory was the *traît-d'union* between the red colour of the triumphator and the supposed rise of personal private statuary in the second half of the fourth century. It was the combination of these two elements that evoked the image of the triumphator standing on his *quadriga like a statue*, a statue with face (and arms?) painted red. This is not yet a theory: it is a brainwave. Brainwaves, especially those which, like the present one, rest on association, may form the first step towards a revolutionary new interpretation of a long known religious or generally ritual phenomenon.<sup>35</sup> However, in the present case the first requirement for making a theory is to make a reasonable case for a historical relationship between the two contributing elements.<sup>36</sup> Why in this period and on whose *initiative* should a ceremony have been created in which the victorious gen-

---

<sup>35</sup> As I have just argued in Versnel 2006.

<sup>36</sup> This, for instance, is what is so glaringly wanting in the ideas of Brelich 1938, who in a way somewhat comparable to Rüpke (who does not mention him) wished to construct a relationship between the triumph and the *funus*, but failed

eral was construed as a living statue in imitation of the statues of prominent individuals which are assumed to have rather quickly, albeit not very generally, emerged in the public domain? R. has given his ideas about the historical *Sitz im Leben* of his new theory and it is our task to subject them to a critical inspection.

## II. *The Historical Context of the New Theory*

R. not only rewrites the triumph, he also — though sometimes unconsciously, or so it seems — rewrites history. One result of his theory, for instance, is that Roman history prior to 350 BC is relieved of 66 triumphs, known from the *Fasti* and literature, including some very famous ones, but also — and historically more important — some held by members of *gentes* that vanished in later history. Of course, everybody knows with how much caution we must approach the historiography on the Regal period and the Early Republic. However, not even the hypercritical wave of the early 20th century, associated with the name of Ettore Pais, who himself made a great scholarly edition of the *Fasti triumphales* (Pais 1920), would have dared to completely discard an entire triumphal chapter from Rome's early history. And yet these scholars seized their chance to relegate almost all the great names of early Rome, including the earliest consuls, to the world of myth and legend. R. does not even mention these historical implications of his theory, which is surprising. One may distrust our sources on early Roman history, one may not despise them. Nor does he share with us his views on how the famous history/legend of Camillus' triumph could have emerged if nothing like a triumph even existed in his time.<sup>37</sup> Complete silence, too, about the existence of an old

---

to explain exactly what this connection might mean. (See my discussion of his ideas in Versnel 1970:116–29.)

<sup>37</sup> Even Walter 2004:382–406, in his extremely sceptical assessment of the legendary versus the historical elements in Camillus' historiography admits that his triumph belongs to the "einigermaßen sichere Faktengerüst" (384). Cf. also Walter

bronze statue of a Hercules Triumphalis (*qui triumphalis vocatur*, Pliny, *NH* 34.16.33) near the Ara Maxima, which used to be adorned with the triumphal costume on the occasion of a triumph, a ritual that very much fits the ancient triumph,<sup>38</sup> but not at all the position of Hercules in 4th century Rome.

Most baffling of all is that R. does not seem to worry about the fact that the deliberate senatorial creation of the most impressive Roman ceremony out of the blue somehow failed to leave the tiniest trace in historiography or antiquarian literature concerning the second half of the 4th century.<sup>39</sup> In this connection, it is surprising that our sources mention 29 triumphs for the second half of the fourth century against, as we shall see, an almost negligible number of honorific statues, while, in light of the theory of R. we would expect to find the reverse or at least a more balanced proportion. Finally, R. seems to view the period of “gentilician warfare” (266), an enterprise of individual families, as extending much further down in history than most scholars tend to do,

---

2000. Taking Camillus’ triumph seriously, Coarelli 1988:431–2 suggests that after the downfall of the last Etruscan king, the earliest mentioned *ovatio* (which was later in use as a minor triumph) in 503 BC was an instauration (or restoration) of the originally Roman form of victory ceremony, which temporarily replaced the “regal” type of Etruscan triumph. In his view, the latter was then restored by the notorious triumph of Camillus in 396 BC, which raised so much indignation due to its godlike type of ritual, especially the white horses he used. I think this idea merits serious consideration. Anyway, all scholars who accept the Etruscan origin of the triumph have self-evidently and naturally accepted that, during its long history, it underwent serious changes in its interpretation, but no-one has fancied scratching 66 triumphs from the historiographical record.

<sup>38</sup> For a revealing discussion see Ampolo 1987:86–87; cf. Coarelli 1988:165.

<sup>39</sup> In Rüpke 1990:226 n. 72, concerning the *triumphus in monte Albano* (first celebration in 231 BC) R. does demand an attestation in our sources for a supposed “bewußter Rückgriff auf eine ältere Institution.” Note that recent scholarship tends to locate the birth of historiography in the form of chronicles and annals in the very same period of the late 4th century: Bleicken 1999:105–14; Sehlmeier 1999:27–34; 2000:273.

namely “before the formation of the nobility,” that is before the second half of the 4th century BC.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, in this connection, the question now arises: how did victorious generals celebrate their victorious entry into the city before the real triumph was created? The answer is that,

They had to fulfil their vows and dedicate part of the booty to specific deities. The deities to which the dedication was made might have been chosen according to the individual preference of the general, family tradition, or more general rules that are perhaps still reflected in the so-called *leges regiae*, the royal laws that defined the dedication of *spolia opima*, the spoils taken from the opposing leader. (266)

If one considers which gods that might have been, one is conspicuously absent: Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, whose temple on the Capitoline hill, founded and built in the last decade of the sixth century, was from that early period on the most impressive monument of Rome’s political and military power. Must we believe that it was only with the foundation of the triumph in the late 4th century that the highest god of Rome and his lofty temple were granted access to and participation in the ceremony of the entry of the victorious general?<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> A different objection, but with the same purport, is made by Itgenshorst 2005:210. In her view, the original function of the triumph was the ritual return of the army *with the booty* (which, albeit not untrue, is, as such, a reduction of the total ritual and its phenomenology). Because it is certain that already in the early 4th century a copious booty was brought along from Veii to Rome, she concludes: “so lag der Ursprung des Triumphrituals einerseits doch weiter zurück als jetzt von Jörg Rüpke angenommen.”

<sup>41</sup> In his *Domi Militiae* (1990:224), Rüpke still emphasized the close relationship of the triumphator and Jupiter: “Der stadtrömische Triumph . . . unlöslich mit dem Kult des Iuppiter Capitolinus verbunden”; cf. also 225: “Die hohe Bedeutung die der Siegesmeldung an Iuppiter zukommt, erweist sich immer dort, wo der Triumph mit einem Ausdruck wie *laurea in Capitolium lata* pars pro toto umschrieben wird”; and 229: “Theologische Bedeutung kommt nur dem Ziel, dem Kapitöl zu.” And see his extensive discussion at p. 232.

I have found it necessary just once to point out these alarming implications of R.'s theory, not discussed by him, before moving on now to his picture of events in the period of the late 4th century. In the remainder of my discussion I must time and again return to, and will rather abundantly quote from, a number of testimonia taken from primary and secondary literature as lavishly cited by R. himself. The reason is that in my view his rich discussion of all kinds of circumstantial events, tendencies and developments in the late fourth century (and in the centuries that follow), albeit interesting and often fascinating, more than once threatens to outshine the few decisively relevant segments of his argument that unconditionally require clear, straight and evidential corroboration.

First of all the private honorific statues. They represent one of the cornerstones of the new theory and R. pays lots of attention to the (rapid?) expansion of this specific expression of hierarchical competition in the theatre of political life among the new nobles in this period. Nonetheless he is forced to admit that, whatever its influence on the events, the introduction of private statues worked "not so much in view of the sheer quantity but because of the associations such statues evoked" (254). This is a transparent way of admitting that our evidence of the supposed increase of honorific statues in this period, both in archaeological artifacts and in literary references, is scarce, to put it mildly. Just as we saw in his treatment of the indispensable (red) terracotta statues ("a consciously archaic form of terracotta statues" [261]), here, too, the wavering in his formulations betrays the author's own vacillation between what he unconditionally needs for his theory ("Forming part of the *creation* of . . . a monumentalized commemorative culture" [262]) and what he regretfully realizes that his sources maximally allow ("a *growing* fashion for displaying private statuary" [261]). The two come to a near crash in his summarizing phrase: "The granting of triumphs by the end of the fourth century may be seen as a reaction to this development, an attempt to regulate,

and bring under senatorial control, an *increasingly common* private practice which had *only recently* become fashionable" (263–64).

Here, then, is a first historical objection to his theory: the truth is that in the period 350–300 only three honorific statues for living persons are mentioned in our sources, something R. does not deny but whose fatal consequences for his theory he is unable or unwilling to acknowledge. The three turn up inevitably (and significantly) in every study on the subject. Here they are once more.

In 338 BC the two consuls L. Furius Camillus and C. Maenius, each on the occasion of their own triumph, were assigned an equestrian statue. These statues are regarded as the earliest honorific statues for living persons.<sup>42</sup> Significantly, Maenius was also known as being connected with a famous "Beuteanathem." He adorned the speakers' platform at the Comitium with the *rostra* (beaked prows of ships) from the booty of the Latini, which gave the name to the whole monument. The third (and last) statue of the 4th century, also an equestrian statue, and in all probability a triumphal honorary statue as well,<sup>43</sup> is the one set up for Q. Marcius Tremulus in 306 as a token of honour for his victory over the Hernici.

Thus, no more than three statues of nobles are attested in the period for which R. surmises that they were numerous enough to

---

<sup>42</sup> Hölscher 1978:338; Lahusen 1983:67–68 (with in n. 12 an attractive solution of the baffling connection between equestrian statues and the column also attributed to Maenius); Sehlmeier 1999:48–50. R. cites all these works. Walter 2004:399, not mentioned by R., writes: "Die von Senat zusätzlich zum Triumph über die Latiner i.J. 338 gewährte Reiterstatue des L. Furius Camillus (cos. 338) bildete zusammen mit der gleichzeitigen von Camillus' Kollegen Maenius die erste historisch gesicherte Ehrenstatue überhaupt." *Ibidem* he repeats and adopts an equally general verdict that the statue attributed to the *great* Camillus by later Latin historiographers is legendary. The skepticism of Wallace-Hadrill 1990:171–72, about the historicity of the statues of Camillus and Maenius, has, as far as I have seen, not received support from other scholars. See for an explicit rejection of his ideas: Sehlmeier 1999:60–62; Oakley 1997–2005, 2:533–35.

<sup>43</sup> Lahusen 1983:69.



make the senate raise an eyebrow about these inconvenient tokens of private initiative. For, indeed, private initiatives they were according to R.:

We should not assume, however, that this development (i.e. of the honorific statue) was directed by the senate. It is more plausible to assume that private initiative was responsible for the pursuit of the attractive possibility to represent, multiply, and immortalize one's likeness in a form previously reserved for gods. (263)<sup>44</sup>

More plausible? Why? Here we have reached the second historical problem. R. presents no arguments, no ancient evidence for his preference. It all remains at the level of assumption. There is nothing wrong with assumptions, but his surmise might instill more sympathy in his readers if it were something more than a *petitio principii*. For, obviously, the cogency of R.'s hypothesis is directly dependent on this very assumption. *If* the erection of the early personal statues were "directed by the senate," his central argument for the intervention of the senate falls flat. So let us have a look at our ancient authors:

On the triumphs of Maenius and Camillus, Livy 8.13.9: *additus triumpho honos, ut statuae equestres eis — rara illa aetate res — in foro ponerentur*; Eutropius 2.7: *statuae consulibus ob meritum victoriae in Rostris positae sunt*.<sup>45</sup> On the statue of Tremulus (306 BC) Pliny's phrasing (*NH* 34.23) does not permit interpretation, but Livy 9.43.22 says: *Marcius de Hernicis triumphans in urbem rediit, statuaque equestris in foro decreta est*. Thus, our sources agree that the three statues were "granted" or "conferred" and that can only have been by the senate, perhaps together with the *populus*. Of course we cannot be sure that these later authors had access to direct and reliable information. But this is at least how they imagined it and the *onus refutandi* rests with the opponent. R., as he

---

<sup>44</sup> Also in other passages: "an increasingly common private practice" (263); "the (mostly) private erection of a statue" (264).

<sup>45</sup> Pliny *NH* 34.20 does not mention the statue but says of the beaked prows of the *rostra* that they were also "fixed on the platform" by the *populus Romanus*.

admits, has nothing at all to support his assumption. Not even plausibility, as appears from the again near unanimous judgement of the very same specialists that he so lavishly adduces. In his seminal and highly influential article, Hölscher (1978:338) already noted that Maenius *received* (*erhielt*) an honorific statue. Lahusen (1983:67) remarks on the same statues: “*wurden Ihnen Reiterstatuen aufgestellt.*” Hölkeskamp (1987:234–35) says: “Bei den Ehrenstatuen handelte es sich um eine *von Staatswegen verliehene Anerkennung*,” adding further literature. Sehlmeier (1999:49) comments on the combination of triumph and statue for Maenius and Camillus: “Das spricht dafür, daß die Statue ebenso wie der Triumph *vom Senat beschlossen wurde.*”<sup>46</sup> Walter (2004:399) speaks about “die *vom Senat* zusätzlich zum Triumph über die Latiner i.J. 338 *gewährte* Reiterstatue des L. Furius Camillus.” Itgenshorst (2005:105) observes that, “Die uns bekannte Ehrenstatuen, die sich Feldherren selbst in Rom oder anderswo aufstellten sind selten. Die Ehrenstatuen für M. Furius Camillus und C. Maenius nach 338 sind, vermutlich ebenso wie die Statue für Marcius Tremulus nach 306, *nicht auf Initiative der Feldherren* selbst errichtet worden.” Sehlmeier (2000:284), in my view right to the point, relates the awarding of a statue for special achievements, namely, “von den Standesgenossen akzeptierte . . . Erfüllung des *mos maiorum*. Demnach betonten die Ehrenstatuen die Hierarchie innerhalb der Nobilität.”

The first known statue erected by private initiative (again combined with a monument made of materials from the booty) was that of Sp. Carvilius, who triumphed over the Samnites in 293 BC. He added his own (modest) statue to that of an enormous statue of Jupiter made out of the seized weaponry.<sup>47</sup> However, this private statue, like the few painted triumphal images dedicated in temples

---

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid* 58 on the statue of Tremulus: the testimony of Livy 9.43.22 “bietet einen Hinweis darauf, daß die Statue beschlossen wurde, d.h. sie wurde auf staatlichen Beschluß errichtet.”

<sup>47</sup> Pliny *NH* 34.43; Livy 10.46.13ff. Hölscher 1978:341; Sehlmeier 1999:13–16.

known from the 3rd century, belongs to the tradition of the images of founders of sanctuaries or other sacred monuments. These have their roots in religious motivations and, although of course heavily (mis)used for political self-promotion, cannot be identified with private honorific statues in the public domain.<sup>48</sup>

More generally, we should not overestimate the number of honorific statues (state-induced or private) in public places, not even in the third century. The most plausible explanation of the fact that only few are mentioned by name is their exceptionality and memorability.<sup>49</sup> However, all this has no significance for our issue, which focused on the late 4th century, to which we now return for our conclusion.

### III. *Conclusion*

The introductory notes of our second section on some historical implications (and complications) of R.'s theory evoked serious

---

<sup>48</sup> Thus Hölscher 1978:342, who adds: "Auf öffentlichen Plätzen, also in rein politischem Kontext, sind solche in eigener Initiative aufgestellten Bildnisse aus so früher Zeit (i.e., the 3rd century) nicht überliefert." Cf. Lahusen 1983:82; Hölkeskamp 1987:234. Flower 1996:55: "Public permission, usually from the senate and more rarely from the people, was needed for any statue erected in a public place, which is to say outside a home, or grave or temple precinct. . . . Most statues of living Romans were put up in temples or their precincts and, therefore, belonged to the god in question." Sehlmeier 1999:115: "Bei dem Denkmal des Carvilius steht der religiöse Aspekt der Weihung . . . im Vordergrund. . . . Es ist ein Stifterbildnis, keine Ehrung auf Initiative der Komitien oder des Senates."

<sup>49</sup> In this respect, the caution of Wallace-Hadrill 1990:170–73, may well be right. Cf. Flower 1996:55: "In fact, there is not much evidence to suggest that statues were frequently awarded by the senate during the Republic." Itgenshorst 2005:103–4: "Insgesamt lässt sich nicht feststellen, dass die Zahl der zeitgenössischen Monumente dieser Art zwischen den Jahren 340 und 219 immer weiter zugenommen hätte." However, the censorial decree of 158 BC to remove all private honorific statues from the area around the Forum, must have had some ground.

questions and objections. With regard to the immediate historical context ancient evidence and modern scholarship seem to agree that:

- In late fourth century Rome, red (faced) (= terracotta) statues were relics at most and were no longer manufactured. At any rate, they could no longer figure as a representative evocation of the notion of statue.
- The terracotta statues that were still to be seen represented gods, not mortals.
- Personal honorific statues were extremely scarce in that period, so much so that the expression “an increasingly common private practice” is misleading and there was nothing much for the senate to frown upon.
- The erection of such personal statues was not an act of private initiative.

These arguments all patently belie the very foundations of R.’s theory, as R. sometimes seems to be aware, but must suppress, smooth over or downplay in order to save his thesis.

In the first section I have argued that some of R.’s reinterpretations of elements of triumph and triumphator are debatable, others improbable or inconceivable, one (and perhaps the most essential) impossible. Here, too, one notices a general disregard for inconvenient evidence, or a lack of consistent reflection on its (negative) implications for the new theory. The hazardous new thesis seems to compel the author to continuously lie low in the face of unwelcome facts. This betrays its vulnerability.

So what is our conclusion? Let me, for a mild but unequivocal verdict, give the floor to Tanja Itgenshorst (2005), a scholar who in light of her own interpretation of the triumph sympathizes with R.’s approach, yet must admit: “Rüpkes innovative Überlegungen beruhen allerdings auf mehreren problematischen Annahmen” (38), later summed up as: “Rüpkes m. E. problematische Erklärung” (210 n. 68). She tackles two of these problematic assumptions (see

above, notes 29 and 40) and concludes that the triumph must have been created far earlier than R. argued, namely in or prior to the very early 4th century BC.<sup>50</sup>

My own conclusion, based on my objections to many more problematic assumptions, is the same as four years ago, namely that the theory, however ingenious, is untenable. The colour red, the starting and most central argument in R.'s theory, appears to be that of a red herring. It attracts and entices but it misleads: the historical facts stubbornly refuse to dance attendance on this red decoy.<sup>51</sup>

Herenweg 88  
2361 EV Warmond  
The Netherlands  
h.s.versnel@hetnet.nl

H.S. VERSNEL

---

<sup>50</sup> She does not seem to be aware that with this conclusion she gives *her* death-blow to the new theory, which is unconditionally dependent on the emergence of personal honorific statues in the period of the growth of the nobility in the late 4th century. It is difficult to understand how she nonetheless can write (38–39): “Trotzdem ist der Beitrag Rüpkes ein erfreulicher und dringend notwendiger Versuch, eine religionswissenschaftliche Diskussion des Triumphalrituals an genuin historische Fragestellungen anzubinden; und in der Sache, also der Annahme einer Entstehung des Triumphes im vierten Jahrhundert, scheint mir sein Ansatz durchaus Plausibilität zu beinhalten.” Nor am I able to understand why 338 or 496 BC lend themselves better for a “genuin historische Fragestellung” than 509 BC.

<sup>51</sup> This means that there is no reason to reject the generally accepted idea that the triumph was introduced in the “Etruscan period” of Rome (late 6th century BC). This conclusion, though, has no bearing on my own farther reaching theory of Near-Eastern roots of the Etruscan/Roman triumph. Even less does it detract from my sincere admiration for Jörg Rüpke’s other innovative and stimulating work on Roman religion.

REFERENCES

- Amiotti, Gabriella  
 2001 "Nome e origine del trionfo romano." In Marta Sordi (ed.), *Il pensiero sulla guerra nel mondo antico* (Contributi dell' Istituto di storia antica 27), Milan, 101–108.
- Ampolo, Carmine  
 1987 "Roma arcaica tra Latini ed Etruschi: aspetti politici e istituzionali." In *Etruria e Lazio Arcaico* = Quaderni del Centro di studio per l'archeologia etrusco-italica 15:75–87.
- Beard, Mary  
 2003 "The Triumph of the Absurd: Roman Street Theatre." In C. Edward and G. Wolf (eds.), *Rome the Cosmopolis*, Oxford, 21–43.
- Beard, Mary, John North, and Simon Price  
 1998 *Religions of Rome*. Vol. 1. Cambridge 1998.
- Beekes, R.S.P.  
 2003 "The Origin of the Etruscans." *Mededelingen Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde* 66,1:1–59.
- Bernstein, Frank  
 1998 *Ludi publici: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der öffentlichen Spiele im republikanischen Rom* (*Historia Einzelschriften* 119), Stuttgart.
- Bleicken, Jochen  
 1999 *Geschichte der Römischen Republik*. 5th ed. Munich.
- Bloch, Maurice  
 1989 "Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is Religion an Extreme Form of Traditional Authority?" In id. *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology*, London, 19–45.
- Bonfante Warren, Larissa  
 1970 "Roman Triumphs and Etruscan Kings: The Latin Word Triumphus." In *Studies in Honor of J. Alexander Kerns*, The Hague, 108–120.
- Brelich, Angelo  
 1938 "Trionfo e morte," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 14: 189–193.
- Charlesworth, M.P.  
 1947 "Imperial Deportment: Two Texts and some Questions." *Journal of Roman Studies* 37:36–40.
- Classen, Carl Joachim  
 1988 "Nec spuens aut os aut nasum tergens vel fricans (Amm. Marc. XVI. 10.10)." *Rheinisches Museum* 131:177–186.

- Coarelli, Filippo  
 1988 *Il Foro Boario: Dalle origine alla fine della repubblica*. Rome.
- Droogers, André  
 1996 "Methodological Ludism: Beyond Religionism and Reductionism." In A. van Harskamp (ed.), *Conflicts in Social Science*, London and New York, 44–67.
- Fless, Friederike  
 2004 "Römische Prozessionen." *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum* 1:33–58.
- Flower, Harriet I.  
 1996 *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*. Oxford.
- Hölkeskamp, Karl Joachim  
 1987 *Die Entstehung der Nobilität: Studien zur sozialen und politischen Geschichte der Römischen Republik im 4. Jhdt. v. Chr.* Stuttgart.
- Hölscher, Tonio  
 1978 "Die Anfänge römischer Repräsentationskunst." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Rom* 85:315–357.
- Itgenshorst, Tanja  
 2005 *Tota illa pompa: Der Triumph in der römischen Republik* (Hypomnemata 161), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Köves-Zulauf, Thomas  
 1972 *Reden und Schweigen: Römische Religion bei Plinius Maior* (Studia et Testimonia antiqua 12), Munich.
- Lahusen, Goetz  
 1983 *Untersuchungen zur Ehrenstatue in Rom: Literarische und epigraphische Zeugnisse* (Archaeologica 35), Rome.
- Mommsen, Theodor E.  
 1859 "Die ludi magni und Romani." *Rheinisches Museum* 14:79–87. Repr. in id. *Römische Forschungen*, II, Berlin 1879, 42–57.  
 1905 "Über die römischen Ackerbrüder." In id. *Reden und Aufsätze*, Berlin, 270–293.
- Oakley, S.P.  
 1997–2005 *A Commentary on Livy, Books VI–X*. Oxford.
- Oudemans, Th.C.W., and A.P.M.H. Lardinois  
 1987 *Tragic Ambiguity: Anthropology, Philosophy and Sophocles' Antigone*. Leiden.
- Pais, Ettore  
 1920 *I Fasti Trionfali del Popolo Romano*. Rome.
- Paladino, Ida  
 1988 *Fratres Arvales: Storia di un collegio sacerdotale romano*. Rome.

- Pollini, John  
 1993 "The Gemma Augustea: Ideology, Rhetorical Imagery, and the Construction of a Dynastic Narrative." In P.J. Holliday (ed.), *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art*, Cambridge, 258–298.
- Rüpke, Jörg  
 1990 *Domi Militiae: Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom*. Stuttgart.
- Salomonson, J.W.  
 1956 *Chair, Scepter and Wreath: Historical Aspects of their Representation on some Roman Sepulchral Monuments*. Diss. Groningen.
- Scheid, John  
 1986 "Le flamine de Jupiter, les Vestales et le général triomphant." In C.H. Malamoud and J.-P. Vernant (eds.), *Corps des dieux* (Le temps de la réflexion 7), 213–230.  
 1993 "The Priest." In A. Giardina (ed.), *The Romans*, Chicago.
- Sehlmeyer, Markus  
 1999 *Stadtrömische Ehrenstatuen der republikanischen Zeit: Historizität und Kontext von Symbolen nobilitären Standesbewusstseins* (Historia Einzelschriften 130), Stuttgart.  
 2000 "Die kommunikative Leistung römischer Ehrenstatuen." In M. Braun, H. Haltenhoff, and F.H. Mutschler (eds.), *Moribus antiquis res stat Romana: Römische Werte und römische Literatur im 3. und 2. Jh. v. Chr.* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 134), München/Leipzig, 271–284.
- Simone, Carlo de  
 1970 *Die griechischen Entlehnungen im Etruskischen*. Vol. 2. Wiesbaden.  
 1988 "Gli imprestiti etruschi nel Latino arcaico." In E. Campanile (ed.), *Alle Origine di Roma*, Pisa, 27–41.
- Stewart, Peter  
 2003 *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response*. Oxford.
- Turner, Victor  
 1988 *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York.
- Versnel, H.S.  
 1970 *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph*. Leiden.  
 1990 *Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos and Hermes: Three Studies in Henotheism* (Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion I), Leiden.  
 2006 "Ritual Dynamics: The Contribution of Analogy, Simile and Free Association." In E. Stavrianopoulou (ed.), *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World* (Kernos Suppl. 16), Liège, forthcoming.



Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew

- 1990 "Roman Arches and Greek Honours: The Language of Power at Rome." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 36: 143–181.

Wallisch, Ernst

- 1954/55 "Name und Herkunft des Römischen Triumphes." *Philologus* 98: 245–258.

Walter, Uwe

- 2000 "Marcus Furius Camillus — Die schattenhafte Lichtgestalt." In K.-J. Hölkeskamp and E. Stein-Hölkeskamp (eds.), *Von Romulus zu Augustus: Große Gestalten der römischen Republik*, Munich, 58–68.

- 2004 *Memoria und Respublica: Zur Geschichtskultur im republikanischen Rom*. Frankfurt a. M.

Weber, Gregor

- 2000 *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike*. Stuttgart.

Zevi, Fausto

- 1995 "Demarato e i re 'corinzi' di Roma." In *L'incidenza dell'antico: Studi in memoria di Ettore Lepore*, I, Napoli, 291–314.

## NOTES ON POMPEIAN DOMESTIC CULTS

MICHAEL LIPKA

### *Summary*

The performance and setting of Pompeian domestic cults is investigated on the basis of the evidence from three Pompeian houses (*Casa del Cenacolo*, *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, *Casa di Marcus Lucretius*). Wissowa's view that representations of gods in mural paintings received divine worship in the domestic sphere, as well as the conclusions drawn from it by modern scholars, are refuted. An attempt is made to outline the functioning of Pompeian domestic cults, including the worship of the emperor, solely on the basis of divine figurines, which are abundantly attested in Pompeian household shrines, but have never before received systematic attention.

A number of deep-rooted preconceptions exist concerning the domestic cults in Pompeii. As the *communis opinio* has it, a household cult was the cult performed at the domestic shrine(s) by the head of the family (normally the *pater familias*). The gods worshipped at these shrines (*dei penates*) were, it is agreed, those represented by small figurines normally placed in the shrines and found in their hundreds by excavators. In addition, following a suggestion by Georg Wissowa, scholars generally hold that deities depicted on murals in or next to the shrines in question could receive worship in the same way as the divine figurines just mentioned. Where there was more than one shrine in a single household, it is normally assumed that these shrines served the needs of different groups within the household. A basic distinction frequently referred to is that there was a shrine for the master of the house and shrines for the rest of the family.

The following pages will examine these issues afresh. It will be shown that Wissowa's assumption and all conclusions drawn from it are erroneous or must be substantially modified. As a consequence,

the article will present the Pompeian household cults without paying further attention to the representations of gods in mural paintings. In contrast, it will lay heavy emphasis on the divine figurines, which are abundantly attested in the archaeological record, though inadequately published so far. The picture that emerges is different from that favoured by modern scholarship in that it stresses the social homogeneity of the Pompeian household cults. Briefly put, I hold the view that there was a single Roman household cult, administered by the head of the family and shared by all family members alike, whatever their social status.

I have based my investigation on three Pompeian houses, the findings of which appear to be especially rewarding: the *Casa del Cenaculo* (V 2, h), the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (VI 16.7, 38) and the *Casa di Marcus Lucretius* (IX 3.5, 24). Naturally, the selection of three houses from a large number of buildings excavated in Pompeii imposes caution as to the general applicability of the conclusions drawn. However, I trust that the overall picture is sound and incontrovertible. To round off the paper, consideration is given to the question of imperial cults in Pompeian domestic contexts.

#### *Casa del Cenaculo* (V 2, h)

The *Casa del Cenaculo* (V 2, h), excavated shortly before 1900, represents an upper middle class urban house of some 400 m<sup>2</sup> of the usual atrium type (fig. 1), its history dating back to the pre-Roman period of Pompeii (2nd century BC). Inside the house, three household shrines were found,<sup>1</sup> in the kitchen (p on the ground plan; fig. 2), in the vestibule (a; fig. 3), and one in a small corridor (k) opening out onto the garden (n; fig. 4). This distribution is

---

<sup>1</sup> Excavation report and detailed description of the building in Mau 1893: 14–27; photographic documentation in *PPM* III 650–675; for the three household shrines found in it Boyce 1937:36–37 [nos. 106–8]; for the mural paintings of the household shrines Fröhlich 1991:268–69 [nos. L46–L48].

not exceptional: as findings in other Pompeian houses indicate, the kitchen was the most likely place for a household shrine.<sup>2</sup> The reasons were not discriminatory, such as a shrine for the master separate from that of servants and other household personnel (as the *communis opinio* will have it), but, primarily, the availability of fire necessary for the burning of offerings, secondly, the existence of ventilation of some kind in an otherwise closed environment,<sup>3</sup> and, thirdly, the opportunity for immediate preparation of the sacrificial meal after offering a blood sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the location of the second shrine of the *Casa del Cenaculo*, situated at one of the walls facing the garden, has parallels elsewhere in Pompeii.<sup>5</sup> Again, this location was in part motivated by practical considerations, viz. the avoidance of smoke and unwanted smells. In fact, apart from the kitchen there is a clear tendency to build household shrines in sheltered, but not closed environments. Thus, kitchen and garden aside, the most frequent locations for household shrines are the atrium and the peristyle.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, household shrines in bedrooms, banquet rooms or studies are rare.<sup>7</sup>

The third household shrine in the *Casa del Cenaculo* is located in the vestibule next to the entrance, i.e. at the most “public” place in the house. Since its location here is comparatively rare and only a few steps away from the atrium,<sup>8</sup> the shrine may be considered a variant of the more common atrium type.<sup>9</sup> Its *raison d’être* was

---

<sup>2</sup> Boyce 1937:105 [s.v. *kitchen*]; Dubourdieu 1989:66–67.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for this aspect also Mart. 7.27.5–6, with Dubourdieu 1989:66–67.

<sup>4</sup> For the offering of blood sacrifices in the domestic cult see Plaut. *Rud.* 1206–9, with Dubourdieu 1989:90–91; Fröhlich 1991:25. The existence of domestic blood sacrifices is still mentioned by Hieron. *In Esaiam* 16.57.7.8.

<sup>5</sup> Boyce 1937:105 [s.v. *viridarium*]; Dubourdieu 1989:65–71.

<sup>6</sup> Boyce 1937:105 [s. vv. *atrium*, *peristyle*].

<sup>7</sup> *tabulinum*: Boyce 1937:68 [no. 297]; *cubiculum*: ibid. 75 [no. 352], 84 [no. 415], 92 [no. 462]; *triclinum*: ibid. 80 [no. 394].

<sup>8</sup> Boyce 1937:22 [no. 9], 27 [no. 47], 33 [no. 81], 36–37 [no. 106], 55 [no. 216].

<sup>9</sup> Boyce 1937:105 [s.v. *atrium*].

not cult function (two shrines would have been considered enough without doubt), but a display of piety. For in the vestibule it would have been noticed by any visitor to the house, while the garden shrine was appreciated only by those with access to the backyards of the house. Finally, the distribution of household shrines in the *Casa del Cenaculo* is not unique: for a house in the near vicinity had shrines, not only in the kitchen and the garden, but also in the atrium.<sup>10</sup> Combinations of shrines in the kitchen and atrium,<sup>11</sup> or kitchen and garden,<sup>12</sup> are well documented by archaeological findings.

An important (though rarely asked) question is how these various shrines in a single household actually operated and interacted. Firstly, the three shrines are all of the niche-type as identified by Boyce,<sup>13</sup> though their artistic qualities are somewhat diverse. The shrines in both the vestibule and kitchen are of a simple, conventional nature. The former, the better preserved, is arched and with a projecting floor. The inside has a coating of white stucco and is painted with red stripes, with no sign of figural ornamentation. The shrine was originally framed by a mural of the 4th style.<sup>14</sup> The kitchen shrine was even less marked. Its walls were covered with red stucco, the pictorial decoration consisted of a red frame of the white inner walls, that were covered with red spots. This shrine was also surrounded by murals of the 4th style.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, the garden shrine was given strong architectural emphasis, in that it had a projecting floor and a frame in the form of an aedicula-façade, complete with lavish polychrome stucco decoration. Within

---

<sup>10</sup> Boyce 1937:33–34 [nos. 83–85].

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Boyce 1937:30–31 [nos. 67–68], 39–40 [nos. 118–19], 61–62 [nos. 249–50].

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Boyce 1937:41–42 [nos. 126–27], 55 [nos. 214–15], 64 [nos. 266–67].

<sup>13</sup> Boyce 1937:10–12; cf. Dubourdieu 1989:71–75.

<sup>14</sup> Boyce 1937:36–37 [no. 106]; Fröhlich 1991:268–69 [L47]; *PPM* III 651 [fig. 2], 652 [fig. 4].

<sup>15</sup> Boyce 1937:37 [no. 107]; Fröhlich 1991:268 [L46]; *PPM* III 675 [fig. 58].

the niche, a figure of Hercules was depicted next to an altar on the one side and a hog on the other, apparently a sacrificial scene. Again, the painting belongs to the 4th style.<sup>16</sup>

In short, the garden shrine was by far the most elaborate and there can be no reasonable doubt that this was the central household shrine of the *Casa del Cenaculo*. When the shrine was unearthed in 1891, a full set of devotional objects was found too, apparently more or less *in situ*.<sup>17</sup> Such objects included a bronze statuette of Mercury, a terracotta figurine of Minerva, along with a bronze statuette of a devotional figure and a small round altar with the remains of sacrificial ashes. The latter clearly suggests that worship took place at the spot shortly before 79 AD. More important, however, is the fact that, despite the impressive representation of Hercules in the garden niche, no actual statuette of Hercules was found. Since the objects unearthed appear to constitute the *full* set of devotional artefacts of the shrine, it is fair to conclude that the wall-painting had no bearing on, or connection with, the worship of the divine statuettes of Mercury and Minerva placed in front of it. It was these latter statuettes which were worshipped. The mural was mere decoration. In fact, I know of no evidence to support the worship of a pictorial representation of a god in Pompeii (or in Rome for that matter). We have to question the old view, then, that the evidence from the Pompeian wall-paintings in private houses can be taken as an indicator of the gods worshipped in the specific domestic cult, an assumption that is ultimately based on the towering authority of Wissowa.<sup>18</sup> The only ascertainable fact to date appears to be the identification of the household gods (*dei penates*)

---

<sup>16</sup> Boyce 1937:37 [no. 108]; Fröhlich 1991:269 [L48]; *PPM* III 670–71 [figs. 47–49].

<sup>17</sup> *Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 1891:376; cf. Mau 1893:26–27; Boyce 1937:37 [no. 108].

<sup>18</sup> Wissowa 1912:163; thus still Fröhlich 1991:20–48, who argued that mural depictions were a cheaper form of representation of the gods than statuettes.

with the small statuettes, found at the household shrines, though badly documented and inadequately published.<sup>19</sup>

This brings us to the question of how the three household shrines at the *Casa del Cenaculo* were used. Was there worship at all three shrines simultaneously, perhaps with certain members of the household restricted to a specific shrine (e.g. slaves and servants performing the household cult at the kitchen shrine, while the *pater familias* offered sacrifices in the garden)? In the case of the *Casa del Cenaculo* at least, this is unlikely. For, given the fact that the contents of the garden shrine were not removed before the destruction of the house, one would also expect to find the contents of the other two shrines, if there had been any. But no such finds are on record, despite a relatively detailed report of the excavation.<sup>20</sup> In short, the *Casa del Cenaculo* appears to have had one central household shrine in which the household gods (*dei penates*), Mercury and Minerva, were normally kept. On special occasions, these *dei penates* may well have been moved to one of the other two shrines. In fact, there is evidence that the household gods could have been specifically placed or juxtaposed, both inside or even outside a shrine, for devotional purposes.<sup>21</sup> But in the *Casa*

---

<sup>19</sup> Pers. 2.56 speaks of the *dei penates* as the “brazen brothers” (*fratres aeni*) only, clearly referring to the figurines, and Hieron. *In Esaiam* 16.57.7.8 still thinks only of the worship of figurines when he writes: *nullusque fuerit locus, qui non idololatriae sordibus inquinatus sit, in tantum, ut post fores domorum* (referring to niches in the vestibule or atrium) *idola ponerent, quos domesticos appellant Lares, et tam publice quam privatim animarum suarum sanguinem funderent*. Hieronymus would no doubt have mentioned the worship of wall-paintings as a further argument for the loathsome behaviour of the pagans. Since the wall-paintings were mere decoration, any conclusions drawn as to the social status of worshippers of divine pictorial representations, as opposed to worshippers of divine figurines, are obsolete in my view, *pace* e.g. Tybout 1996:368–370.

<sup>20</sup> *Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 1910:328–330.

<sup>21</sup> Petron. 60, with Dubourdieu 1989:85–86, 102–3. According to Plut. *Sull.* 29.6, Sulla always carried a statuette of Apollo with him, manufactured in Delphi. In a similar vein, Apuleius used to be accompanied by a divine statuette, apparently as a means of protection (Apul. *Apol.* 63).

*del Cenaculo*, and perhaps more generally, the *dei penates* were grouped together in one place, particularly marked in artistic terms as being the central shrine.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, if there was simply one central shrine (with a number of auxiliary shrines), then a strict separation of “servant” shrines, e.g. in the kitchen, as opposed to “master” shrines, e.g. in the atrium, is an unlikely scenario. Literary evidence suggests that the house-owner and his wife could make offerings to the gods at the “fire,” i.e. at the kitchen shrine,<sup>23</sup> and the kitchen was an ideal place for a shrine for the practical reasons mentioned earlier.

If we turn again to the group of devotional figurines found in the *Casa del Cenaculo*, it is noticeable that Mercury and Minerva have nothing in common in terms of functions. Rather, the choice of this particular divine group as *dei penates* was due to the private predilections of the owner of the *Casa del Cenaculo*. This indicates that, in marked contrast to the official sphere, the combination of *dei penates* in domestic contexts did not need to be justified by functional complementarity or other external parameters. Rather, the *tertium comparationis* of specific divine groups lay in the vicissitudes and predilections of the owner of the house. Furthermore, for whatever reasons, the fact that the statuette of Mercury was made of bronze, while the statuette of Minerva was made of terracotta (we cannot be sure about further differences in artistic execution, since the pieces were hitherto unpublished), unambiguously suggests that the two statuettes did not come into being at one and the same time and for the same purpose. It is, of course, possible that originally there had been two terracotta statuettes (also the portable altar was of terracotta), and that the statuette of Mercury was

---

<sup>22</sup> In Boyce 1937:41 [nos. 123 and 125] we may have a case of statuettes being placed in two shrines of the same household simultaneously. But actual cult statuettes were found only in shrine no. 123, which happens to be marked out also in architectural terms (aedicula façade).

<sup>23</sup> Ov. *Trist.* 1.3.43–46; Plaut. *Aul.* 385–87.



replaced by a bronze copy only when the original was accidentally broken or lost. However, as other examples indicate, such heterogeneous divine groups of *dei penates* are far from exceptional: indeed, a domestic shrine was found to contain a bronze bust of Minerva, an alabaster figurine of Venus, and an unidentified divine representation made of ivory.<sup>24</sup> A group of six bronze statuettes found in a household shrine in the *Casa delle Pareti Rosse* was not manufactured together, as can be inferred from differences in artistic execution.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, another group of bronze statues of Fortuna and two Lares differed strikingly in form with respect to the technical details of their bronze bases.<sup>26</sup> With the proviso that there is limited published information concerning the statuettes, it can be said that the group of *dei penates* of the *Casa del Cenaculo* was not invariably fixed after the foundation of the house (one should bear in mind that the *Casa del Cenaculo* may have existed for two hundred years by the time it was destroyed). Rather, the group could have been altered over time by adding new statuettes to those already existing (rather than removing old ones).

*Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (VI 16.7, 38)

The beginnings of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (VI 16.7, 38) date back to the 3rd century BC, when a number of smaller residential units were in evidence on the same site. In the first half of the 1st century BC, the extant building complex was designed, a main characteristic being the large peristyle around which various domestic quarters were situated. In its structure (peristyle-house), its size (more than 800 m<sup>2</sup>) and its lavish architectural decoration it differed from the *Casa del Cenaculo*. This lends support to the suggestion that it must have belonged to a cultured family of the

---

<sup>24</sup> Boyce 1937:41 [no. 123].

<sup>25</sup> Boyce 1937:77 [no. 371].

<sup>26</sup> Boyce 1937:88 [no. 439].

economic elite with antiquarian taste, as, among other findings, a collection of pieces of sculptural art testifies (fig. 5).<sup>27</sup>

Two household shrines were discovered in the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*. One (e on the ground plan; fig. 6) was situated almost at the centre of the complex, where the domestic and public spheres intersect: the shrine was situated at the northern wall in the public and representational part of the house *par excellence*, i.e. the peristyle, immediately next to a room (I), which both by its exceptional wall decoration (murals in “tapestry style,” four gold plaques engraved with Cupids and covered with glass medallions, giving the name to the entire complex) and the existence of alcoves, with mosaic representations of bedside-rugs on the floor, must be identified as the bedroom of the owner of the house. The decoration of the bedroom floor belongs to the 2nd style, i.e., according to Seiler, “around or shortly after the middle of the 1st century BC,”<sup>28</sup> which suggests that this part of the house dates back to the same period. Just as the bedroom walls, the household shrine was decorated with paintings of the 4th style (according to Seiler between 62–70 AD), something which does not necessarily preclude an earlier existence. Here, the household gods were worshipped in an aedicula, which was discovered with a full set of religious artefacts at the beginning of the last century.<sup>29</sup> It contained three bronze statuettes representing the Capitoline triad (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva), a bronze figurine of Mercury, and two Lares. The statuettes of the triad were clearly manufactured and displayed as a conceptual unit, as is shown by the fact that they are similar in size (h. 16–17 cm), display the same iconographic details such as a throne on which all three are seated, and are generally executed in a similar manner. In contrast, the figurine of Mercury, sitting on a rock and almost twice as high (h. 31 cm), as well as the two standing

<sup>27</sup> For the various phases of the building, see Seiler 1992:75–84.

<sup>28</sup> Seiler 1992:95–96.

<sup>29</sup> Boyce 1937:57–58 [no. 221]; Seiler 1992:40–49, 82–83, 102–4.

Lares (h.  $\approx$  40 cm) are markedly different in terms of iconography, all of which indicates that they did not originally belong to the same group. Furthermore, despite the prominent position of the official temple of the Capitoline triad on the Forum of Pompeii, the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* is so far, at least to my knowledge, the only example on record in which the triad appears in a religious domestic context: nowhere else is the group found among the extant murals in house shrines, let alone, as a grouping, among the statuettes. In general, there can be no doubt that the triad was worshipped in private after the arrival of the Romans. But the scarce archaeological evidence discovered so far leads one to assume that it was not popular in domestic contexts. On the other hand, Mercury, the god of commerce, was notoriously important in a harbour city such as Pompeii. Thus his statuette in the shrine of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (as well as his frequent appearances in divine groups elsewhere in Pompeii) does not cause surprise.<sup>30</sup> One should remember that the gods worshipped in a domestic cult were the personal choice of the owner of the house and therefore may often have been dependent on his occupation.<sup>31</sup> Most popular were the Lares, being as it were the stock-in-trade of the sculptural and pictorial decoration for household shrines in Pompeii.<sup>32</sup> It is natural to hypothesize that the old household gods of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* were Mercury (perhaps because its owner was a merchant) and the Lares. One may further hypothesize that the Capitoline triad was added due to specific indebtedness to the “Roman cause” felt by the owner of the house (possibly a Roman?).<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Fröhlich 1991:49, 140–44; Krzyszowska 2002:93–99. In fact, he is also found in a mural painting of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, on the northern wall of bedroom D: *PPM* V 731–733, [figs. 30, 31, 33].

<sup>31</sup> Fröhlich 1991:38–44.

<sup>32</sup> Krzyszowska 2002:42–48.

<sup>33</sup> Varro *ant. frg.* 205 Cardauns, connecting the Capitoline triad with the *penates*, is mere philosophical speculation and hardly belongs here. For the passage see also Dubourdieu 1989:146–50.

When entering the peristyle of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* from the main entrance (7 on the ground plan), the visitor faces another shrine in the left hand corner (d; figs. 7a and b). Like the main household shrine, this shrine was also situated at the wall in the central spatial unit of the house, i.e. the peristyle, though in this case at a significant distance from any private quarters. The shrine was dedicated to Egyptian gods. This is clear from the mural decoration: in the upper section of the southern wall, four Egyptian gods are represented (fig. 7c). To the far left stands the jackal headed Anubis, dressed in a red cloak. He is followed by Harpocrates with a cornucopia, and Isis, wearing a white garment and holding a sistrum in her left hand. Furthermore, Sarapis can be identified, wearing a white robe and also holding a sistrum in his right hand as well as a cornucopia in his left. Situated at a lower level on the panel, below the four divine figures, two poorly preserved anthropomorphic figures are discernible. The figure on the right stands in front of a structure which may well be an altar. Both hands can be seen stretched out in front of its body holding unidentifiable objects which may possibly be torches. The corresponding upper panel of the east-wall of the shrine was decorated with various objects connected with the worship of Egyptian gods. These included a sistrum, a cylindrical wicker casket, and a coiled serpent (fig. 7d).<sup>34</sup>

The paintings of the Egyptian shrine belong to the 4th style and therefore to the final phase of the city. Holes in the wall and a rectangular gap in the pavement below clearly suggest that the wall paintings formed an integral part of a large wooden shrine. A number of objects found in the area must have belonged to this shrine. Those concerning actual cult practice are an alabaster statuette of Horus (h. 42 cm) and a white marble figurine, representing a female deity sitting on a throne with a cornucopia. This is without doubt a representation of Isis-Fortuna (h. 11 cm). It is reasonable to suggest that these two statuettes, and only these, were worshipped

---

<sup>34</sup> For the *sacellum*, see Seiler 1992:42, 46.

at the shrine. The fact that they were made from different materials and vary in artistic skill and execution (different heights) clearly suggests that they were not manufactured together for the same purpose. Furthermore, Horus, cannot be identified in the (extant part of the) mural paintings and Isis is not represented there in the form of Isis-Fortuna either. Once again, statuettes and mural paintings are iconographically independent and have different functions.<sup>35</sup>

It is a most remarkable fact that in the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* two sets of household gods were worshipped simultaneously. For the centralized position of the Egyptian shrine within the architectural layout of the house excludes the possibility that this shrine was restricted to, say, only the servants or slaves. Quite the opposite is true. Indeed, the cult of Egyptian gods was openly advertised by the location of its shrine in the peristyle. In fact, Fröhlich has shown that the worship of Egyptian gods focused notably on the representational quarters of Pompeian houses.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, in the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* the cult of the Egyptian deities was deliberately separated from the cult of the traditional household gods. However, this is not generally the rule, for we find statuettes of Egyptian gods, not infrequently, intermingled with those of the traditional Roman gods in Pompeian household shrines.<sup>37</sup> Their separation in the case of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* can be explained on the principle of functional complementarity. Apparently, the owner of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* considered

---

<sup>35</sup> In general see Boyce 1937:56–57 [no. 220]; for the wall paintings, see Tran Tam Tinh 1964:129–30 [nos. 17–18]; Fröhlich 1991:281 [L74]; for the statuette of Isis-Fortuna, see Tran Tam Tinh 1964:155 [no. 77], for that of Horus, Tran Tam Tinh 1964:155 [no. 77], 162 [no. 105, with photograph]. Besides, a large terracotta lamp with a representation of three Egyptian gods (Isis, Harpocrates, ?) was found, cf. Boyce *ibid.*, and Tran Tam Tinh 1964:170–71 [no. 132].

<sup>36</sup> Fröhlich 1991:41–42.

<sup>37</sup> Boyce 1937:64 [no. 264, Harpocrates, Minerva, Lar], 82 [no. 406, Isis-Fortuna, *Genius*, Lar (?), Jupiter, Hercules], 83 [no. 408, Isis-Fortuna, Jupiter, Neptune or Aesculapius, Hercules, *Genius*], 100 [no. 500, 2 figures of Isis-Fortuna, Jupiter, Neptune, Helios, *Genius*, Faun].

the Egyptian deities to have a closer functional relationship to each other than to the traditional Graeco-Roman gods. Apart from this, however, there can be little doubt that the owner employed the Egyptian shrine in the vestibule also as a means of decoration, if not for self-display.

The history of the household gods of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* may, therefore, be tentatively reconstructed as follows.<sup>38</sup> When the peristyle complex received its basic shape in the first half of the 1st century BC, a (hypothetical) household shrine was erected at the very centre of the house, at a point which lay directly next to the private quarters, while at the same time being in the representational centre of the house, namely the peristyle. Apart from the Lares (the household gods *par excellence*) Mercury was worshipped there, perhaps as the patron deity of commerce (which would allow certain conclusions to be drawn as to the occupation of the owner of the house). At a later stage, the Capitoline triad was added to the group. This supports the view that the owner of the house was a Roman or someone who felt especially loyal to the Roman cause. At any rate, during the last decades before the destruction of the city, an additional shrine was built, again in the peristyle, but at a distance from the private quarters and dedicated specifically to Egyptian gods.

*Casa di Marcus Lucretius (IX 3.5, 24)*

In Rome, *dei penates* were passed on to successive generations within the same household and were thus referred to as *patrii penates*.<sup>39</sup> The same principle holds true of the imperial family. We hear that on his deathbed Antoninus Pius ordered the statue of Fortuna, “which used to stand in the bed-chamber of the emperor,” be brought to his successor.<sup>40</sup> It is a qualified guess that the statue of

---

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Seiler 1992:136–38.

<sup>39</sup> Wissowa 1912:163 n. 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Anton. Pius*, 12.5.

Fortuna was one of the *dei penates* of the imperial household and, in this case, was formally transferred from father to son. There appears to be at least one Pompeian case where such a “continuation” of the worship of specific *dei penates* is documented by archaeological evidence. However, both houses in question were excavated at an early stage (in the mid 19th century) and, unfortunately, the documentation of the finds is dauntingly poor.

The so-called *Casa di Marcus Lucretius* (IX 3.5, 24; fig. 8) is likely to have belonged to an affluent Pompeian citizen. This can be assumed from the generous size of the complex, resulting from the merger of two houses of the atrium type. The distinction of its owner would find further support, if he was indeed (as a graffiti found in the house would suggest)<sup>41</sup> identified with Marcus Lucretius, a notable of the city (*decurio*), who held the priesthood of Mars.<sup>42</sup> Situated at the west wall of the main atrium (2) is a rectangular podium made from brick, which apparently formed the substruction of an aedicula. It was presumably here (the report is vague), that 5 bronze statuettes were found during the 19th century excavations. These statuettes included a bearded Jupiter, wreathed, with a thunderbolt in his hand and an eagle at his feet; Hercules with a club and dressed in a chlamys; Isis-Fortuna, wearing the crescent moon and lotus flower on her forehead and holding a cornucopia and a rudder in her hand; and a veiled *genius* with cornucopia and patera. The fifth divine figure is represented with a beard, wreathed and also dressed in a chlamys. Boyce identified the figure as that of Neptune or Aesculapius.<sup>43</sup>

Immediately next to the *Casa di Marcus Lucretius* lay a modest building (IX 3.2; fig. 8), originally thought to have been a workshop. This interpretation was due to three receptacles made from

<sup>41</sup> *CIL* IV 879.

<sup>42</sup> The Lucretii were one of the most important families of Pompeii, cf. Castrén 1975:185–86.

<sup>43</sup> Boyce 1937:83 [no. 408]; for a photograph of the aedicula, see *PPM* IX 152 [fig. 15], 156 [fig. 22].

brick, that were built against the southern wall of the atrium (2 on the ground plan). However, the relatively numerous wall decorations and the existence of mosaics in four of the rooms suggests that the complex served as a residential unit, at least in the 1st century BC and perhaps still in the 1st century AD. However, it is clear that at some stage the *triclinium* (?) (4) was transformed into a shop, opening up onto the central road, now the *Via di Stabia*.<sup>44</sup> In the southern garden wall (which due to its stucco decoration [1st style] may date to the pre-Roman period) there is a niche, in which five bronze statuettes were found. Despite insufficient documentation by the excavators, it appears that the figurines represented the same gods as those found in the *Casa di Marcus Lucretius*: Jupiter, Hercules, Isis-Fortuna and a *genius* with almost exactly the same iconographical characteristics. Also the fifth figure, provisionally identified with a Lar by Boyce, may well have been identical to the one found at the *Casa di Marcus Lucretius* and there provisionally labelled by Boyce as “Neptune” or “Aesculapius.” Boyce’s description is almost identical (bearded, crowned [as opposed to “wreathed”], with the left arm raised and a patera in the right hand).<sup>45</sup>

The appearance of the same group of deities in two neighbouring houses and representing almost identical iconography, can hardly be coincidence. The relationship of the residents of the two houses is, of course, open to speculation, though it is not unduly imaginative to consider that a freedmen (or a son?) had purchased (or was granted?) the house next to that of his former master (father?), and, on that occasion, made certain changes to ensure his income, such as the transformation of the *triclinium* into a shop and the erection of the three receptacles in the atrium.

---

<sup>44</sup> *PPM* IX 128–29.

<sup>45</sup> Boyce 1937:82 [no. 406], for a photograph of the niches see also *PPM* IX 136–37 [figs. 20–21].



*Imperial Cult*

Throughout the Roman world the emperor was worshipped in a private or, more specifically, a domestic context.<sup>46</sup> Statues of Marc Aurelius are explicitly said to have been set up among the *dei penates*.<sup>47</sup> In Claudian Rome we hear of the worship of powerful freedmen among the *dei penates* (but evidently the account is biased).<sup>48</sup> Imperial worship in Pompeian household cults therefore comes as no surprise, one example being a graffiti scratched under the floor of a Lararium in a private house reading *Lariis Augustos* (I 10.3).<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, we find a depiction of a *genius* next to a niche in what was certainly a domestic context, whatever the actual function of the building (IX 9.13). The representation of the *genius* is accompanied by the letters *EX SC*. Fishwick, taking up a suggestion from Mau and Boyce, has made a strong case (though hypothetical) for the identification of the figure with that of the *genius Augusti*, which was introduced into private cult by a (hypothetic) senatorial decree in 30/29 BC.<sup>50</sup> Fishwick's early dating for the introduction of the cult of the *genius* of the emperor would also permit us to accommodate a figure of a *genius* painted on a wall at a crossroads and dated on stylistic grounds to ca. 20 BC. Despite the iconographic resemblance with the (suggested) *genii Augusti* at Pompeian street shrines of later times, this *genius* has so far been identified by most scholars as a *genius loci*. This view is based on the assumption that the cult of the imperial *genius* was not added to the cult of the Lares at the crossroads before the Augustan reform of the city districts in 8/7 BC.<sup>51</sup> Another, less convincing, though recent, argument would be to reject worship of the *genius Augusti*

---

<sup>46</sup> Fishwick II.1:532–40.

<sup>47</sup> *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Marc. Anton.* 18.5–6.

<sup>48</sup> Suet. *Vit.* 2.5.

<sup>49</sup> Boyce 1937:27 [no. 47]; Fröhlich 1991:255 [L13].

<sup>50</sup> Boyce 1937:93 [no. 466]; Fishwick II.1:376.

<sup>51</sup> Fröhlich 1991:35; Tybout 1996:372.

to a period after the reign of Augustus, indeed to the period of his Julio-Claudian successors (Caligula, Claudius) and, accordingly, to interpret all *genii* found at Pompeian street shrines as *genii loci*.<sup>52</sup> Even so, the worship of the Lares Augusti after reorganization of the city districts by Augustus in 8/7 BC is beyond doubt. There remains, however, a noticeable discrepancy between public and private imperial worship. While the emperor was worshipped at numerous street shrines and prominent positions in the Forum area, his cult was far from common in the domestic context. As the above-mentioned case demonstrates, Lares Augusti found on the walls of houses had to be marked by written descriptions in order to be recognized as such, and further evidence is rare.<sup>53</sup> Despite a recent attempt to interpret all painted *genii* in domestic contexts as *genii Augusti*, it is much more plausible to follow Wissowa's reasoning and view them as *genii familiares*.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

Taking as a starting point the *Casa del Cenaculo*, this paper offers evidence in support of the view that depictions of divine figures in mural paintings in Pompeian household shrines had *no* religious relevance whatsoever, despite the almost unanimous acceptance by modern scholarship of Wissowa's suggestion that such representations were objects of worship. Normally, there was a single set of household gods, represented by the divine figurines placed in the central shrine of the household, even in cases where several household shrines are attested. An exception to this rule is offered by the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, where we observe two different shrines operating *simultaneously*. The reason for this exception could be that the Egyptian gods, to whom a separate

---

<sup>52</sup> Gradel 2002:162–97; Lott 2004:73–80, 106–17.

<sup>53</sup> Some possible cases in Tybout 1996:373–74 n. 83.

<sup>54</sup> Schäfer 1993:442–46; Hänlein-Schäfer 1996:84–92; but rightly negative Tybout 1996:371–74.

shrine was dedicated in the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, were considered by its owner to form a functional unity. Nevertheless, we find elsewhere the Egyptian gods worshipped alongside traditional Roman deities without having a separate shrine dedicated to them. This observation leads to an alternative explanation. It is conceivable that the shrine of the Egyptian deities in *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* owed its existence not just to religious sentiments but to the feeling that having two shrines in the “public” area of the house was more prestigious than only one. On this reasoning, we have to consider the possibility that a number of Pompeian household shrines never really had a cultic function at all. They, as well as the figurines displayed in them, may have been simply decorative.

The fact that a single set of divine figurines was normally worshipped in the same household clearly implies, apart from other practical considerations, that no social discrimination was made with regard to administering different shrines in the same household. This also holds true in the case of the two shrines of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, for they were both situated in the peristyle, i.e. the representational quarters of the house, and were therefore equally accessible. In principle, then, all members of the household alike would have equal access to the ceremonies conducted by the head of the family at the various household shrines. These ceremonies, however, normally involved only a single set of divine figurines, that is, the *dei penates*.

Both the *Casa del Cenaculo* and the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* offer archaeological evidence to support the view that the group of divine figurines which constituted the household gods (*dei penates*) was not invariably fixed, but could be adjusted to the (changing) predilections of the house-owner. In other words, gods and goddesses could always be added, or, less likely, removed from the current set of household deities. In the case of the adoption of the Capitoline triad in the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, this may have happened merely for “political” reasons.

There is well-known literary evidence, confirmed by archaeological findings from the *Casa di Marcus Lucretius*, which suggests

that the group of gods worshipped by the head of the family might be adopted by a son or freedman on the founding of a new household. Such influence of the master on the choice of favoured deities of his relatives or clients could manifest itself in other areas of religious life as well.<sup>55</sup>

The imperial cult was a “public” phenomenon. In other words, the more “public” a specific shrine was felt to be, the more likely it was to include the worship of the emperor. This principle may well have been reflected in the distribution of the imperial cult within households. The more “public” a household shrine was felt to be, the more likely it was to incorporate the imperial cult in some way. Though I know of no figurines of an emperor worshipped among the *dei penates* from Pompeii, the case of the Capitoline triad, worshipped in the peristyle (the most “public” area) of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*, may well point to this direction. Whatever unpublished evidence may hide, the emperor was clearly not favoured, as people turned to the gods for their own needs in the private setting.

University of Patras  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department of Philology  
26500 Rion  
Greece  
lipka@upatras.gr

MICHAEL LIPKA

---

<sup>55</sup> Cf. the dedicatory inscription to Fors Fortuna from the vicinity of Rome set up by a professional corporation. We find a slave and a freedman of the *gens Carvilia* among its members. What is remarkable is the fact that a consul of the same *Carvili* is known to have dedicated a temple of Fors Fortuna in Rome in 293 BC (*CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 977, with Livy 10.46.14; Bömer 1981:147, 149). One may also refer to a freedwoman of the empress Livia, Philematio, who was priestess of Bona Dea. Ovid attests to the close connection of Livia with the same goddess, whose Aventine temple the empress restored (Ov. *fast.* 5.157–58, with *CIL* VI 2240, and Brouwer 1989:280).

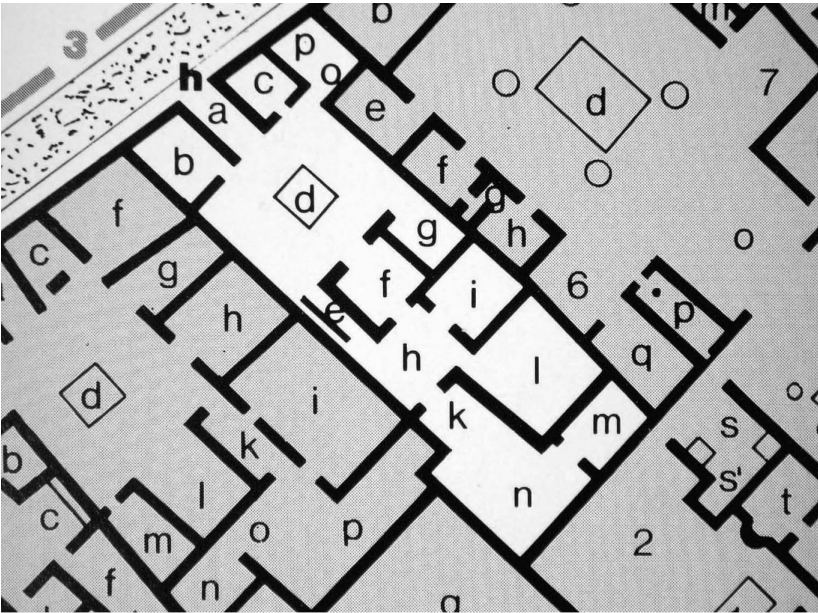


Figure 1. Ground plan of the *Casa del Cenaculo* (PPM III 650).



Figure 2. Household shrine in the kitchen of the *Casa del Cenaculo* (Fröhlich 1991, pl. 30.2).



Figure 3. Household shrine in the vestibule of the *Casa del Cenaculo* (*PPM* III 652, fig. 4).

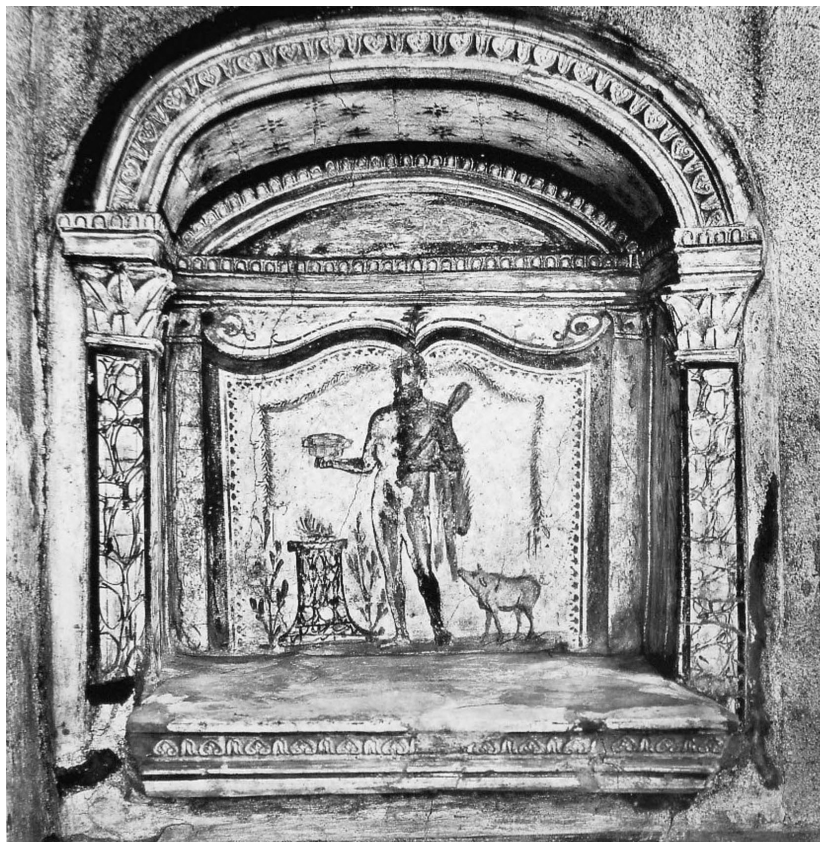


Figure 4. Household shrine in the garden of the *Casa del Cenaculo* (Fröhlich 1991, pl. 32).



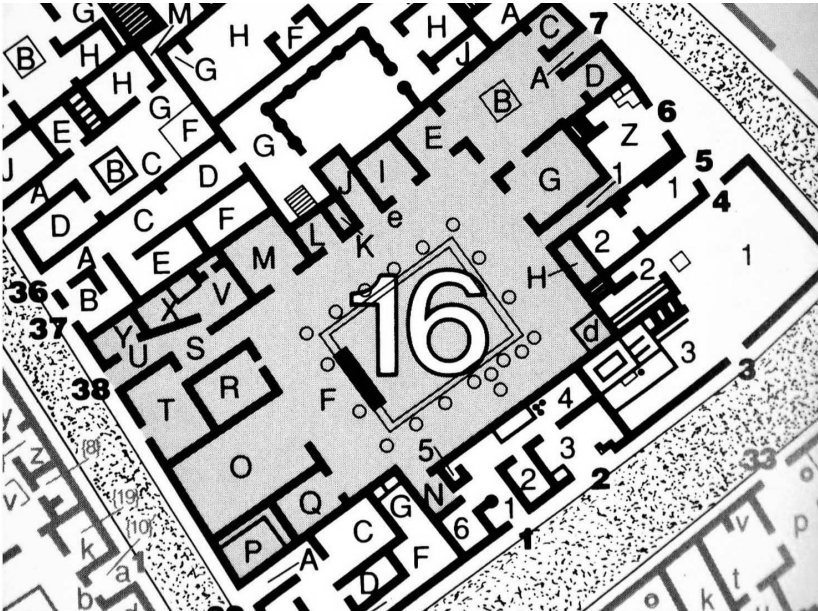


Figure 5. Ground plan of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (PPM 714).

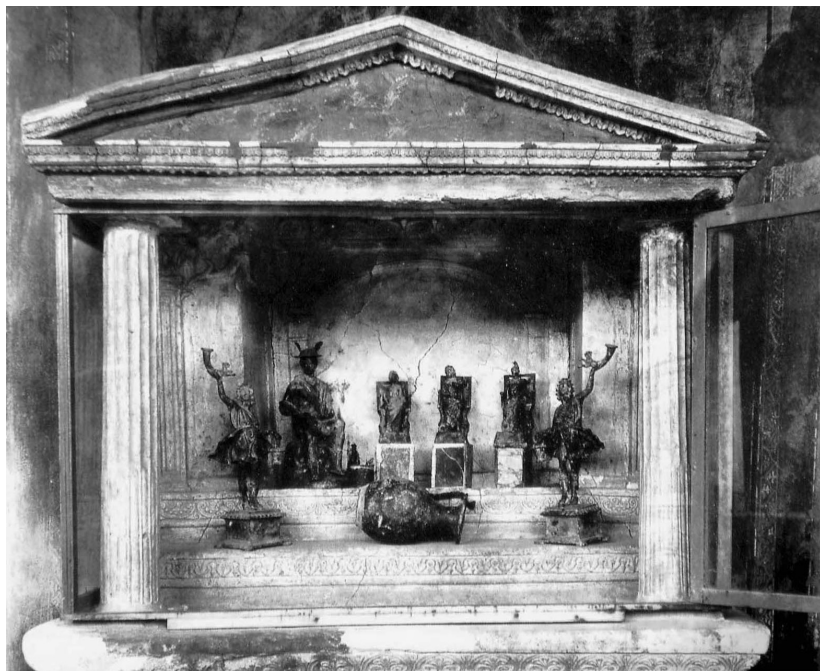


Figure 6. Lararium of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati*  
(PPM V 759, fig. 83).



Figure 7a. Sacellum of Egyptian deities from the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (PPM V 764 fig. 93).

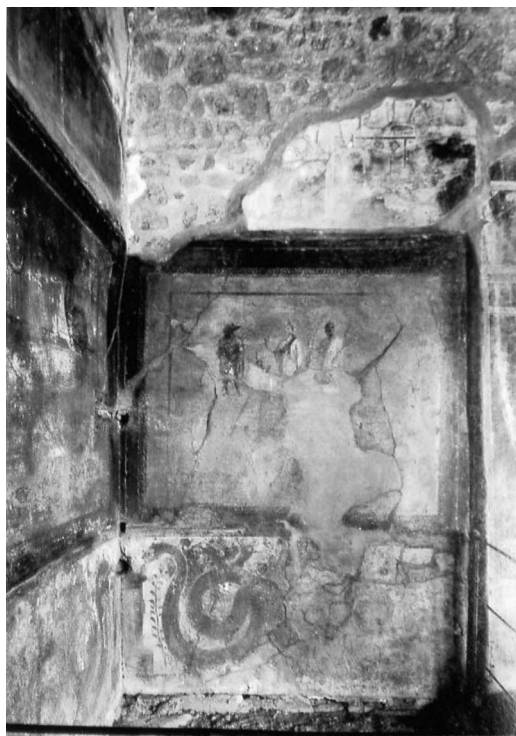


Figure 7b. Sacellum of Egyptian deities from the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (PPM V 764, fig. 94).



Figure 7c. Upper panel of the south wall of the sacellum of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (PPM V 765, fig. 96).

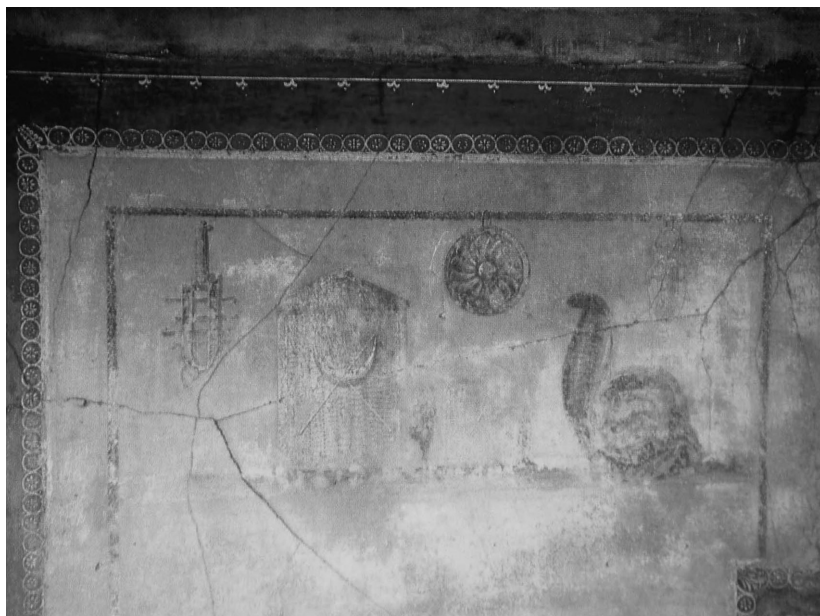


Figure 7d. Upper panel of the east wall of the sacellum of the *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (PPM V 765, fig. 95).



Figure 8. Ground plan of the *Casa di Marcus Lucretius* and neighbouring building (PPM IX, 141).

## REFERENCES

- Bömer, Franz  
 1981 *Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom*. Vol. I. 2nd ed. (Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei 14.) Wiesbaden.
- Boyce, George K.  
 1937 *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii*. (Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome 14.) Rome.
- Brouwer, Hendrik H.J.  
 1989 *Bona Dea: The Sources and a Description of the Cult*. (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 110.) Leiden.
- Castrén, Paavo  
 1975 *Ordo Populusque Pompeianus: Polity and Society in Roman Pompeii*. Rome.
- Dubourdieu, Annie  
 1989 *Les origines et le développement du culte des pénates*. Paris.
- Fishwick, Duncan  
 I–III = *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West. Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*. 3 vols. Leiden 1987–2004.
- Fröhlich, Thomas  
 1991 *Lararien- und Fassadenbilder in den Vesuvstädten: Untersuchungen zur "volkstümlichen" Pompeianischen Malerei*. Mainz.
- Gradel, Ittai  
 2002 *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford.
- Hänlein-Schäfer, Heidi  
 1996 "Die Ikonographie des *Genius Augusti* im Kompital- und Hauskult der frühen Kaiserzeit." In A. Small (ed.), *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity. Papers presented at a conference held at The University of Alberta on April 13–15, 1994, to celebrate the 65th anniversary of Duncan Fishwick*, Ann Arbor, 73–98.
- Krzyszowska, Anna  
 2002 *Les cultes privés à Pompéi*. Warsaw.
- Lott, John Bert  
 2004 *The Neighbourhoods of Augustan Rome*. Cambridge.
- Mau, August  
 1893 "Scavi di Pompei." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abt.* 8:4–61.
- PPM  
 I–IX = Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli et al. (eds.), *Pompei. Pitture e Mosaici*. 9 vols. Rome 1990–1999.



Schäfer, Thomas

- 1993 Review of Thomas Fröhlich: *Lararien- und Fassadenbilder in den Vesuvstädten*. *Gnomon* 65:441–48.

Seiler, Florian

- 1992 *Casa degli Amorini Dorati* (VI 16,7.38). Munich.

Tran Tam Tinh

- 1964 *Essai sur le culte d'Isis a Pompéi*. Paris.

Tybout, Rolf A.

- 1996 “Domestic Shrines and ‘Popular Painting’: Style and Social Context.” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9:358–374.

Wissowa, Georg

- 1912 *Religion und Kultus der Römer*. Munich.

## INTERESTED COMPANIONSHIP

A review article

CHRISTOPH UEHLINGER

John R. HINNELLS (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, London — New York: Routledge, 2005. xii, 556 p. Hardcover ISBN 0-415-333105, 114.95 US\$; Paperback ISBN 0-415-33311-3, US\$ 34.95.

Robert A. SEGAL (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Malden, MA — Oxford — Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. xx, 472 p. Hardcover ISBN 0-631-23216-8, US\$ 125.95.

On first sight, these two volumes published within a few months by two leading Anglo-American publishing houses seem to duplicate each other rather patently. Both promise to introduce their reader to a subject supposed to be difficult enough that it requires a companion. Remarkably enough, they agree on how to label the field (“study of religion,” that is, neither “science of religion” nor “study of religions” nor “religious studies”).<sup>1</sup> Both books are collective works, with chapters authored by well-established scholars, who joined the invitation of a single responsible editor.<sup>2</sup> Both follow a somewhat similar plan when they divide their subject into two major sections, one being concerned with “approaches” (even “key approaches” in Hinnells’ volume), the other with “topics” or

---

<sup>1</sup> But see below, n. 6.

<sup>2</sup> According to the dedication, the original editor of the Blackwell project was John Clayton (1943–2003), former chair of the Department of Religion at Boston University. Segal does not specify the state of the project at the time he took over the editorship. Some deficiencies noted below may relate to the sad contingencies under which the project had to be finalized.

“key issues.”<sup>3</sup> The decision to group together approaches *and* topics resp. issues in a single volume may reflect a new tendency in the field,<sup>4</sup> since earlier textbooks focused either on method and theory<sup>5</sup> or critical terms. It is unclear to me whether the new tendency is driven by epistemological, curricular, political, economic or still other reasons.

For the sake of convenience, I shall abbreviate the Routledge volume *R*, and Blackwell’s *B*. According to the dust jackets, *R* is “a major resource for everyone taking courses in religious studies.” It promises to be “an excellent guide to the problems and questions found in exams and on courses,” a “valuable resource for courses at all levels,” while *B* “will be the definitive reference work for students and scholars alike.” One senses that *R* has the promising student in mind (who may be interested and even brilliant but can only afford a paperback edition), while *B* (which does not or not yet have a paperback edition) targets the teaching scholar with the aim of providing well-informed state-of-the-art knowledge and syntheses. While Segal has authored two major pieces (on “Theories of Religion” and “Myth and Ritual”) in Hinnells’ book, there is no contribution the other way round. Despite such minor asymmetries,

---

<sup>3</sup> Hinnells considered the inclusion of a third section on critical terms, but ultimately refrained and points readers to Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Willi Braun, Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *Guide to the Study of Religion*, New York: Cassell 2000, which is divided into three main parts entitled “description,” “explanation” and “location” (but avoids “method” as a classifier); and Johann Figl (ed.), *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft. Religionen und ihre zentralen Themen*, Innsbruck: Tyrolia and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003, which is divided into three sections providing an overview about the discipline, a presentation of various religious traditions, and selected topics which are discussed in a cross-cultural perspective.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Whaling (ed.), *Theory and Method in Religious Studies. Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Berlin — New York: Mouton de Gruyter 1995; Peter Connolly (ed.), *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London — New York: Continuum 1999.

the two volumes obviously play the same game. The question is whether they agree on the rules, and to what extent it matters whether you follow *R* rather than *B* or *vice versa*. Before comparing the two and eventually making a choice, I shall look at each one individually: how does the companion introduce himself, and how does he plan the tour? What are the approaches he considers, and which topics or issues does he identify as important enough to be discussed? One may also ask to what extent the individual contributions relate to each other and, hence, what overall impression a reader will get of the discipline as a whole. Finally, since textbooks such as the volumes under review are meant to be both introductory companions and permanent reference resources for academic study, one should ask what is done for easy handling by potential users. Since “definitive” sounds rather promising, we shall start with *B*.

## I

*B* contents: List of contributors (ix–xi). — Introduction (xiii–xix). — *Part I: Approaches*. (1) Fiona Bowie, Anthropology of Religion (3–24). — (2) Paul Roscoe, The Comparative Method (25–46). — (3) Rodney Stark, Economics of Religion (47–68). — (4) Stephen Prickett, Literature and Religion (69–90). — (5) Thomas Ryba, Phenomenology of Religion (91–122). — (6) Charles Taliaferro, Philosophy of Religion (123–146). — (7) Roderick Main, Psychology of Religion (147–170). — (8) Grace Davie, Sociology of Religion (171–192). — (9) Ian Markham, Theology (193–209). — *Part II: Topics*. (10) Richard H. Roberts, Body (213–228). — (11) Douglas J. Davies, Death and Afterlife (229–238). — (12) G. Scott Davis, Ethics (239–254). — (13) Henry Munson, Fundamentalism (255–270). — (14) Jeffrey Burton Russell, Heaven and Hell (271–284). — (15) Lawrence S. Cunningham, Holy Men/Holy Women (285–294). — (16) Gustavo Benavides, Magic (295–308). — (17) Colin Campbell, Modernity and Postmodernity (309–320). — (18) Jeffrey J. Kripal, Mysticism (321–336). — (19) Robert A. Segal, Myth (337–356). — (20) Mark Juergensmeyer, Nationalism and Religion (357–368). — (21) Lorne L. Dawson, New Religious Movements (369–384). — (22) Simon Coleman, Pilgrimage (385–396). — (23) Catherine Bell, Ritual (397–412). — (24) Steve Bruce, Secularization (413–429). — Consolidated Bibliography (431–463). — Index (465–471).

Segal introduces the volume by asking “What Makes Religious Studies a Discipline?” (xiii).<sup>6</sup> He discusses various answers and asserts that it is neither a distinctive method (such as phenomenology) nor a “religionist” claim to purportedly non-reductionist explanations of its subject (that is, religious explanations of religion as opposed to anthropological, sociological, psychological or economic ones), but merely “a subject matter, open to as many approaches as are prepared to study it” (xvii). As far as such a stance eliminates “religionist” reservations against studying religion with a limited set of methods from a particular disciplinary vantage point, this reviewer would certainly agree (after all, “religious” or “religionist” approaches to religion are just as reductionist as others, although they generally claim otherwise).<sup>7</sup> “What counts is that the subject matter —

---

<sup>6</sup> The terms “study of religion” and “religious studies” are here used as synonyms, whereas in *R* “religious studies” is examined (by D. Wiebe, see below) as one particular way of practising the study of religion. The following may be a somewhat naïve question, but I wonder why Segal and others should maintain the term “religious studies” for their own practice as “scholars of religion.” Is it not precisely the adjective’s ambiguity which exposes the academic study of religions both to “religionist” claims or misunderstandings and to the skepticism of neighbouring disciplines as to its epistemological status? In any case, one cannot use the term “religious studies” as an overall designation for the field (as Segal does in *B*) and at the same time distinguish it from social-scientific approaches to religion (as he does in *R*, p. 51). Alternatively, if you suspect “religious studies” to be generally “religionist,” this seems to disqualify the term as an overall designation for the field unless you consider yourself a “religionist.” Could it be, then, that terms are used loosely on purpose by some who do not want to give in and leave part of the territory to the “other side”? A curious side-effect of this situation can be observed in continental Europe, where even in non-English speaking countries scholars are increasingly pushed to label their discipline, departments, faculties, etc. in English terms. Most esteemed colleagues have thus become practitioners of a “science of religion” although their training and perspective is much closer to the humanities than to the social sciences (note that according to the European continental tradition, history does not rank among the social sciences but is part of the humanities).

<sup>7</sup> *Pace* Segal, who considers phenomenology of religion and theology “by

religion — be connected to the rest of human life — to culture, society, the mind, economy — rather than separated from it by the siege-like defensiveness of religionists.” (xvii) One senses that Segal writes in two directions, one confronting his so-called “religionists” (he mentions Eliade who still seems to have followers in the academy), the other inviting as many disciplines as wish to join the enterprise. This certainly sounds attractive but also raises two questions: First, should we call the “study of religion” a discipline at all, when it is actually an “area study” (Segal, xvii)? Second, what does it mean to be “a scholar of religion” as distinguished, e.g., from a historian, a psychologist or a sociologist studying religion? My own, preliminary and pragmatic answer would be that on the one hand, the openness of the “study of religion(s)” to many approaches — some of which may well be mutually exclusive — is defensible as an academic discipline only when one admits that students of religion cannot practically cope with all of them with the same rigour. On the other hand, “scholars of religion,” in addition to performing according to the professional standards of any particular discipline they draw upon, should have a distinct interest in connectivity and transdisciplinarity across the area as a whole, which is quite a demanding condition.

*B* Part I includes nine approaches, eight of which are called “disciplines” by Segal (this is debatable in the case of “phenomenology of religion,” while comparativism provides the exception). All but two entries were written by professionals in the disciplines concerned, the exceptions being Rodney Stark, who writes on economics but is by profession a sociologist, and Roderick Main, who authors the chapter on psychology of religion and is said by Segal to be not a professional psychologist, but “a scholar of religion” (xviii). The nine approaches are organized alphabetically, as are the fifteen topics that make up Part II. The advantage of such a principle is that one cannot quibble over an agenda that might be

---

nature nonreductionistic” (xviii), whereas I can only observe that these approaches more often than others express a *claim* for non-reductionism.

hidden somewhere behind the table of contents (although this may in itself imply an agenda of another kind). The obvious disadvantage for what is meant to be a companion is that it excludes any meaningful parcours through the area and certainly makes it more difficult for the average reader to find his or her way along the conceptual landscape of the “study of religion.” The editor certainly did not want to lay out a path leading *from* anthropology *to* theology, but this is the inevitable arrangement which results from his application of the alphabetic principle.<sup>8</sup> At times this can give readers a headache, particularly when chapters following each other have no concern for connectivity. Consider the switch from the “comparative method” to “economics of religion”: what might have considerable potential for meaningful discussion is here left totally unexplored. Stark even boasts that “although I have not read any of the other chapters included in this book, I am certain that this chapter is very different from the rest” (65) and goes so far as to imply that his contribution is more scientific and less exposed to animosity toward religion than others, a curious statement which might discourage customers of a rather expensive book. In other instances, readers could be tempted to make connections, such as from phenomenology to philosophy, and overlook that they are not meant to do so. Generally speaking, the individual chapters do not even follow a common structure. Although the arguments deployed in many contributions would lend themselves to cross-referencing and mutual stimulation, that is, the kind of connectivity which can make the study of religion an intellectually thrilling enterprise, there is virtually no dialogue between the chapters of this book. Orientation therefore becomes a major difficulty for the average reader. Unfortunately, *B* has no subject index but a “consolidated bibliography,” which duplicates the bibliographies printed at the end of each chapter. Instead of this useless luxury of 33 pages, I would have loved to see a concluding chapter by Segal reflecting over the unity of the whole enterprise called “the study of religion.” To sum

---

<sup>8</sup> This was already the case in Connolly’s collection cited above, n. 5.

up, *B* is as much a companion as the Bible may be called a book: in reality, readers find themselves in the hands of a syndicate of guides, while the area they are invited to explore looks considerably fragmented. The final product can hardly be considered “the definitive reference work” it claims to be, especially since some of the more recently debated issues are absent from the discussion (e.g., gender, cognition, or media, to mention some more obvious topics), screened off as it were for reasons unknown at least to the average reader.

Despite these reservations, there is much food for thought to be found in individual chapters. Prickett’s contribution on “Literature and Religion” is a *tour de force*, guiding as he does through the history of mainly German, French and English thinking about the ability of literary aesthetics and poetic art to reflect metaphysical realities and what was often considered the ultimate object of religion (God, the holy, etc.). Demonstrating the powerful impact of romanticism in this regard, Prickett surveys illustrious authors from Friedrich Schleiermacher to George Steiner and Hans Urs von Balthasar (whose name is consistently misspelled “Balthazar” and who was not a German [85], but a Swiss theologian). Prickett does *not* discuss the more general question to what extent literature may be studied in a religio-historical perspective as a peculiar mode of expression and experience of religious belief or attitude within a given cultural context. Impressively learned as the essay may be, I am not sure whether this is what the average reader would expect to find in a companion guide of the genre reviewed here, especially in the light of Prickett’s overtly theological conclusion that “it is one thing to believe that religious experience is in the twenty-first century inescapably literary and aesthetic or, conversely, that great literature presents ‘transcendent’ experience. It is quite another to insist on equivalence,” a question which according to him requires returning to the Kierkegaardian paradox of incommensurables and “may well turn out to be the major calling for twenty-first-century theology” (88). Be this as it may, it is not this sort of questions that most “scholars of religion” or *Religionswissenschaft* are generally



concerned with. It is first and foremost literature as an important subset of culture and its relation to another subset called religion that should appear within their focus. Contemporary literary criticism (or comparative literature, for that matter) has much to say about this relationship, but unfortunately that is not on Prickett's agenda.<sup>9</sup>

Lack of space does not allow to summarize each contribution individually. Even the non-specialist will recognize that some chapters stand out because of their didactic quality (e.g., Ryba's presentation of phenomenology, which clearly distinguishes etymology from actual procedures and philosophical from religious phenomenology; or Benavides' discussion of magic which is both historically and anthropologically informed; or Segal's own contribution on myth), while others impress by their concision and sharp focus (e.g., Juergensmeyer on nationalism and religion). A number of contributions have been written by authors whose scholarship has long taken the path towards canonization (Bell on ritual or Bruce on secularization are representatives of that category). As a consequence, many of these chapters make very profitable reading, even more so when put alongside more systematic and more didactic treatments such as may be found in *R* or earlier textbooks (see above, notes 5 and 6).

Personally, I have found the essay on the comparative method particularly rewarding, maybe because Roscoe writes from a social-scientific perspective with which I am less familiar.<sup>10</sup> He starts by asserting that "comparison is an inescapable and unobjectionable aspect of reasoning" (26), and rightly stresses that "most presentations of the scientific method bear scant resemblance to what scientists do in practice" (27). He lays out the "essential elements of the comparative method," the theoretical presumption on which it

---

<sup>9</sup> For complementary reading, see below, n. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Note that this is not an introductory essay as one might expect to find in a companion volume. When looking for a textbook treatment discussing general characteristics of a comparative approach, the history of its implementation in the

is grounded, including the claim for an explanatory potential (as opposed to purely descriptive taxonomy), and major objections against it, particularly “disputes about the validity of the comparatist assumption that the surface manifestations to be explained are all expressions of the same underlying, obscure or obscured explanatory entity or process,” referring himself to such classics as Franz Boas, or Ruth Benedict for whom “the significance of a cultural trait depends on the way in which that trait has merged with other traits from different fields of experience” (29). Distinguishing between “humanistic social scientists” on the one hand, whose interest is in thick description, representation of cultures “in their own terms” and cultural difference, and “‘scientific’ social scientists” on the other hand, who conceptualize humans as sharing capacities that transcend cultural differences, Roscoe notes that the scientists’ problems with comparison seem to be methodological and technical rather than theoretical, whereas the humanists’ difficulties are theoretical rather than methodological. Roscoe discusses “Galton’s problem” as a prominent example of seemingly technical nature which however ends up in the question how to define a cultural entity and its boundaries or what makes up a sample unit as distinct from another — quite a theoretical issue as it were. At the end, he notes, “the fieriest disputes about the comparative method are anything but debates about methodology. (. . .) Generally, these discussions have gone nowhere because in actuality they are covert exercises in asserting and defending *a priori* assumptions about the nature of humanity and of cultural processes.” (43) Humanistic interpretivists offer no better alternative as long as they follow only informal and unspecified sampling procedures. “To choose cases simply because they happen to corroborate a pet hypothesis is indefensible no matter what one’s epistemology. Any comparison needs to justify

---

study of religion, and a discussion of major issues, critiques and contemporary responses, one should better turn to R and W.E. Paden’s treatment of “Comparative religion.” In contrast to Roscoe’s, however, this is firmly grounded in the humanities tradition.

the sample it draws and to make some attempt to evaluate the possible effects on the sample of shared histories or cultural contacts” (44) — a statement, it may be noted, which puts at particular ease historians interested in culture contact. Having clearly outlined the aporetic fallacies of scientific or humanistic dogmatism, Roscoe concludes that “rather than endlessly discussing the comparative method, we should get on and do it, and see what results seem to work in getting us along, in helping us understand the social worlds around us,” drawing on the parallel of physical sciences which “advance in the virtual absence of debate and disagreement about method” (44). There are of course undeniable differences in studying cultural rather than physical worlds, but science is meant to generate knowledge, an aim that can only be achieved by testing whether something actually works, which, according to Roscoe, is not (or not always) what debates on method and epistemology do. “Useful theories are unlikely to result from insisting, covertly or overtly, on the superiority of one set of *a priori* assumptions about humans over another, or from epistemological debates over what ‘method’ apply to their study. These debates will continue to be vacuous and unproductive. Results will come rather from getting on and studying humans and their cultures, including their religions, with whatever resources at hand. Comparison — whatever it is and however it actually works — is one such resource, and there are few better ones.” (45)

I do not consider this a “disappointingly aimless program of action” (44) but find Roscoe’s pragmatism rather refreshing. Still, I would raise three *caveats* not by way of criticism but as matters of genuine concern. First, I suspect that we should better consider comparativism as a meta-approach rather than an approach or a method; it relates to an intellectual attitude that may well be a characteristic requirement for the academic study of religion but does not, however, define an exclusive or specific set of rules and procedures. In contrast to what both *B*, *R* and many others tend to make us believe, comparison does not represent one approach

alongside eight or more others, but an option within each of them (an option that you may or may not take in a particular instance but which you should not exclude *a priori* when studying religion, or literature, or law, or anthropology, etc.).<sup>11</sup> Second, once you consider your field as an area rather than a discipline there can be no such thing as *the* or *a* comparative method. Whenever you do take the option of comparativism (which, I repeat, is not what you always need to do), your research will have to follow slightly different rules of procedure (or method) according to the peculiar discipline involved — though, admittedly, no comparativist should dispense himself or herself from the challenges of Galton's problem.<sup>12</sup> Third, I doubt that we can do away with our theoretical problems by simply ignoring them (which is not what Roscoe does, but his readers may be tempted to do so), and I doubt even more that we may solve them by cutting through the Gordian knot — it will immediately reassemble somewhat differently.<sup>13</sup> This is probably part of the game's particular appeal, not just idle spilling of ink and time, and may well be one of the reasons why people choose to study — and others, after all, to teach — religion rather than physics, or, for that matter, statistics.

---

<sup>11</sup> Note that comparativism does not figure in any of the three introductory reference works cited above (n. 5), but in the guide published by Braun and McCutcheon (above, n. 4). However differently *B* and *R* may treat the subject, the mere fact that both include a separate chapter on comparativism instead of, e.g., including comparativism within phenomenology, signals a renewal of scholarly interest (see also the following note).

<sup>12</sup> Note, however, that Roscoe does not state whether his discussion pertains as much to so-called qualitative empirical studies as it does to quantitative studies whose significance depends on their adherence to the rules of statistics.

<sup>13</sup> For one reason or another (perhaps because it is a debate among "scholars of religion," not social scientists?), Roscoe does not refer to three recent discussions on comparativism that are important reading for anyone involved in the

## II

*R* contents: Notes on contributors (ix–xii). — Introduction (1–3). — (1) John R. Hinnells, Why study religions? (5–20). — (2) Eric J. Sharpe, The study of religion in historical perspective (21–45). — *Part I: Key approaches to the study of religions*. (3) Robert A. Segal, Theories of religion (49–60). — (4) David F. Ford, Theology (61–79). — (5) Peter Vardy, Philosophy of religion (80–97). — (6) Donald Wiebe, Religious studies (98–124). — (7) Martin Riesebrodt/Mary E. Konieczny, Sociology of religion (125–143). — (8) Rosalind I.J. Hackett, Anthropology of religion (144–163). — (9) Dan Merkur, Psychology of religion (164–181). — (10) Douglas Allen, Phenomenology of religion (182–207). — (11) William E. Paden, Comparative religion (208–225). — *Part II: Key issues in the study of religions*. (12) Darlene M. Juschka, Gender (229–242). — (13) Kim Knott, Insider/outsider perspectives (243–258). — (14) Paul Heelas, Post-modernism (259–274). — (15) Richard King, Orientalism and the study of religions (275–290). — (16) Judith Fox, Secularization (291–305). — (17) Richard King, Mysticism and spirituality (306–322). — (18) Judith Fox, New religious movements (323–336). — (19) Henry Munson, Fundamentalism (337–354). — (20) Robert A. Segal, Myth and ritual (355–378). — (21) Paul Gifford, Religious authority: scripture, tradition, charisma (379–391). — (22) Garrett Green, Hermeneutics (392–406). — (23) Michael Barnes, Religious pluralism (407–422). — (24) George Moyser, Religion and politics (423–438). — (25) Chris Park, Religion and geography (439–455). — (26) Thomas Dixon, Religion and science (456–472). — (27) Luther H. Martin, Religion and cognition (473–488). — (28) Mark Hulsether, Religion and culture (489–508). — (29) John R. Hinnells, Religion and the arts (509–525). — (30) Seán McLoughlin, Migration, diaspora and transnationalism: transformations of religion and culture in a globalising age (526–549). — Index (550–556).

“Why study religions?” is precisely the question Hinnells asks by way of an introduction to the *R* volume. That nothing is taken for granted could be said to be one characteristic of this collection, which has been designed for students from undergraduates to post-graduates. *R* has an obviously didactic structure which, we are told

---

historical and systematical study of religion: Luther H. Martin et al., *MTSR* 8 (1, 1996) 1–49; J.S. Jensen et al., *Numen* 48 (3, 2001) 237–373; and W. Braun et al., *MTSR* 16 (1, 2004) 1–101. See now also Maya Burger, Claude Calame (ed.), *Comparer les comparatismes. Perspectives sur l’histoire et les sciences des religions*, Paris and Milan: Edidit Arche, 2006.

in the introduction (3), follows broadly a course Hinnells taught for years at SOAS. But when a subject “is one as full of sensitivities, presuppositions and prejudices as the study of religion is, then it is essential that, from the outset, the student is alerted to debates and doubts, and that key issues, motives, aims and beliefs are foregrounded” (2). Hinnells starts with the most basic questions regarding a field or discipline: why it may be interesting to study religions (here in the plural, since “the word ‘religion’ is useful, but should be used with caution” [2]), or else — since most potential readers will have made their choice anyway — in which context (globalization, migration, religiously motivated tensions etc.) and to what purpose (as a key to understanding cultures) one might most profitably do it. The introductory section also asks where the academic study of religion comes from and how it has got where it is now (a fine piece by the late Eric Sharpe). Considering myself a historian more than anything else “of religion(s),” I am convinced that postmodern students even more than their predecessors need some basic orientation marks regarding the history of their field, including contextual information about the “classics,” and this is what this book provides in reasonable quantities, sustained attention to contemporary debates notwithstanding.

Part I on approaches heads off with a chapter on “Theories of religion” by Robert A. Segal, which is somewhat ironic since Segal’s own collection does not include a chapter on theory as one particular way of approaching religion in its own right. Segal takes up much of his argument with “religionist” approaches that he already deployed in the introduction to *B*, and elsewhere, but the *R* version is much more syllogistic and introduces a number of logical and terminological distinctions which are as basic as they are useful (origin vs. function, historical origin vs. recurrent beginning, “how” vs. “why” explanations, variants within the “religionist” argument and between classical or contemporary social scientific theories, etc.). His final section goes beyond “religionism” and charges heavy criticism against the opposite side, i.e., postmodern critics who according to Segal not only refuse to see the real virtues of

consistent theory but “arise in conspicuous ignorance of contemporary philosophy of social science and the sociology of natural science” (59). Segal expresses passing criticism against Mark Taylor’s *Critical Terms* (1998, see above, n. 3) but singles out<sup>14</sup> Tomoko Masuzawa’s *In Search of Dreamtime* (1993) and Russell McCutcheon’s *Manufacturing Religion* (1996) as objects of particularly strong refutation.<sup>15</sup> Students of religion will not only learn about Segal’s disdain for postmodernist thinking (which he considers to be non-theory), they will also notice that the study of religion is no pastime for weaklings but sometimes a rather physical enterprise. *C’est de bonne guerre*, as the French would say. The more interesting point is that Segal’s frontal attack against postmodernism will hopefully lead readers to chap. 14 of the same book, where Paul Heelas, who thinks that the study of religion really has an urgent need for vitalization, exposes postmodernism in a more neutral mode as an “assault on the Enlightenment project” (this section will help students to identify Segal as a major contemporary representative of just that project) but also as the “radicalization of difference” (which will help them to understand the anger that the reader perceives in Segal’s charges). Heelas goes so far as to anticipate a third way in between the two so different sorts of criticism, but he wisely adds that “the emergent middle way is perhaps best kept in dynamic and creative tension when the poles — High Enlightenment and Wild Postmodernity — are forcefully argued” (272).

R Part I continues with a series of contributions that may well be read in line and form the kind of *parcours* which I missed in the B volume, leading from theology and philosophy of religion through “religious studies” to social-scientific approaches. Comparative

---

<sup>14</sup> Curiously enough, Segal’s “religionists” remain anonymous, except in discussions with long-gone giants such as M. Eliade.

<sup>15</sup> He also calls McCutcheon’s political and materialist approach “delightfully iconoclastic” (58). Insiders will be aware that this is just another round in an ongoing exchange of arguments between Segal and McCutcheon.

religion is discussed last as if providing some sort of common horizon to all others.<sup>16</sup> Let me again single out one essay, “theology,” written by David F. Ford, a Cambridge-based professor of Divinity, who is also the author of a *Very Short Introduction* to the subject.<sup>17</sup> Ford not only exposes major options regarding a distinction between theology and what he calls “religious studies,” or integration of the two, he also distinguishes five different “types” of Christian theology and identifies several variants of “theology” in non-Christian religious traditions such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Theologians will be satisfied to notice that their enterprise is here described to students of religion in a straightforward but sufficiently sophisticated way, not as one of these unfortunate caricatures which “scholars of religion” sometimes like to draw before sending off their arrows of despair. Not all theology practised in academia is a type 5 undertaking (“exclusively a matter of Christian self-description,” “a grammar of faith” [70]), and students of religion should know about that. Interestingly enough, Donald Wiebe in his critical review of “Religious Studies” has another five-fold typology, which can be compared to Ford’s, although (as insiders to the debate would have expected) they do not easily fit each other.<sup>18</sup> Having read this fine exercise in taxonomy, intelligent students will then turn to *R* chap. 13 and see what Kim Knott has to say about insider and outsider (or *emic* and *etic*) perspectives. They will first note that either scholar writes as an insider of his own preferences, and second ask themselves whether and how a binary taxonomy can fit a pentagram, or whether and how a pentagram can be translated into a continuum, which is the way how Knott herself modelizes the range of options from insider to outsider, or fully participant to exclusively observer position. As

---

<sup>16</sup> But see above, n. 10.

<sup>17</sup> David F. Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Again (see above, n. 6), I cannot understand why Wiebe, after detailed



for readers of this review, they will have understood that what makes the *R* guide particularly worthwhile in my view is the fact that it does not only allow for meaningful linear reading, but also lends itself to cross-referencing and connection-building which is actually the way of reasoning the internet generation of students is used to. Readers will hardly be surprised to learn that the *R* collection comes with a subject index, that its chapters have rather more extensive bibliographies than the *B* ones, and that sometimes these even include short characterizations, which may be helpful for undergraduate students but also for others.

The sequence of chapters in *R* Part II is less linear than in Part I. The editor has placed "Gender" on top of the agenda, which is fully understandable,<sup>19</sup> immediately followed by "insider/outsider perspectives," "postmodernism" and "orientalism." Again, the interested reader may go webbing: gender issues are to some extent insider/outsider issues, while postmodernism raises the question whether gender criticism should be considered as an offshoot of the enlightenment project or practised as a variant of wild postmodernism, especially when it comes to feminist approaches (note that there is no chapter on feminism in *R*, but you may go to the index and see that it figures at several places, not only in the chapter on gender). While the first third of *R* could be termed the "of" section (theories *of* religion, philosophy *of* religion, anthropology *of* religion etc.), the last quarter is definitely an "and" section (religion *and* politics, geography, science, cognition, culture, and the arts). A chapter on religion and the arts, here written by Hinnells himself, is rare enough to be highlighted, as this remains one of the most

---

criticism of the many ambiguities surrounding the label "Religious Studies" in the US and Canada, concludes by the rather optimistic perspective that it "should be understood to refer to a purely scientific undertaking" (121), as if any of those who do it otherwise were prepared to accept that normative statement in the sense he would intend.

<sup>19</sup> The ratio between male and female contributors is 20:4 in *B* and 24:5 in *R*, that is 5:1 in both.

neglected subjects in the study of religion, past and current, in spite of all that has been said and written about iconic, pictorial, or visual turns, visual culture, media and communication or more generally about religion and the senses. I agree with Hinnells that studies on art “should be a primary focus” (509) in the study of religion, whether pursued with an aesthetic, iconological, semiotic or any other perspective, provided it does not fall into the phenomenological traps of earlier, generally text-oriented scholarship. Hinnells, who also appears to be an artist himself, stresses aspects of representation, experience and emotion in his chapter on arts. These are but a few out of many themes that one could legitimately address, and there is an obvious need not only among humanities-oriented scholars of religion, but anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists as well, to take into account visual aspects of religious culture and to study the complex ways religion(s) codify visual sensory perception, value different kinds of visual experience and draw up rules what should or should not, by whom and under what circumstances, be exposed to the individual or the public gaze.<sup>20</sup>

Issues which presently appear to be marginal to the field could well develop into full-blown approaches in a near future. It is not far-fetched to anticipate that religion will soon be considered a formal subject of political science or human geography. A chapter on the transformations of religion and culture (and for that matter, the study of religion) in a globalizing age of migration, transnationalism, diasporas and multiple identities is aptly set at the end of Part II (insiders may know that Hinnells is also the editor of the *Handbook of Living Religions* [1984, 1998]). Everyone is aware

---

<sup>20</sup> I may refer to a forthcoming article, “*Visible Religion* und die Sichtbarkeit von Religion(en). Voraussetzungen, Anknüpfungsprobleme, Wiederaufnahme eines religionswissenschaftlichen Forschungsprogramms”: *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (2, 2006) 165–184, where I argue that *Visible Religion* could provide an interesting, if presently underexplored interface for humanistic (art-historical, iconological, cultural, aesthetic) and social-scientific studies on religion.

that *something* (would someone please supply a plural?) called “religion” is increasingly used today as a powerful, and sometimes terrifying, marker of identity and difference among individuals, communities and public constituencies (not to speak of civilizations) in almost any country of the world and certainly in all those “western countries” where religion, in the sense it is addressed in this book, can be studied at the university. “Given the wide-ranging interest,” writes Seán McLoughlin, “of other disciplines in migration, diaspora and transnationalism, and the continuing salience of religion for these issues and related public policies, the study of ‘diaspora religion’ ought to be one area where the prospects for such engagement are good. (. . .) while religious studies may begin to relocate in terms of broader disciplinary contexts, it must also start to ‘export’ more sophisticated accounts of religion to those for whom such a task is less of a priority.” (546) Such a conclusion gives the whole *R* project a touch of open end horizon, leaving the by now graduated reader with an (unspoken) *tua res agitur*.

### III

As it happens, *R* and *B* had first been attributed separately to two reviewers by the editors of this journal. It was Michael Stausberg (University of Bergen, Norway) who suggested that they should be reviewed alongside each other. Readers will by now have understood that as far as I am concerned, I found *R* more appealing, and coming closer to its self-declared purpose, than *B*. In a final section, I shall now compare the contents of both companions and ask what approach or topic/issue is lacking here and there and might be included in future editions, provided the editors also consider them appropriate. In order not to be too subjective, one could have cross-checked with the earlier textbooks mentioned above in nn. 3–5, but both Hinnells and Segal will have done that repeatedly when preparing their collections, so this comparison could only reveal a few subjects that for one reason or another they did *not*

want to figure in their book. We might however consult a recently published two-volumes collection of *new* approaches to the study of religion (henceforth abbreviated *NA*)<sup>21</sup> in order to see how the present and future of the study of religion is perceived by others working in the field.

Listing the approaches discussed in *R&B* results in the following table:<sup>22</sup>

<i>B</i>	<i>R</i>
[cf. <i>Introduction</i> (Segal)]	Theories of religion (Segal)
Theology (Markham)	Theology (Ford)
Philosophy of Religion (Taliaferro)	Philosophy of religion (Vardy)
—	Religious studies (Wiebe)
Sociology of Religion (Davie)	Sociology of religion (Riesebrodt/Konieczny)
Anthropology of Religion (Bowie)	Anthropology of religion (Hackett)
Psychology of Religion (Main)	Psychology of religion (Merkur)
Phenomenology of Religion (Ryba)	Phenomenology of religion (Allen)
The Comparative Method (Roscoe)	Comparative religion (Paden) <sup>23</sup>
Economics of Religion (Stark)	—
Literature and Religion (Prickett) <sup>24</sup>	—

---

<sup>21</sup> Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, Randi R. Warne (ed.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Vol. 1: Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches* (Religion and Reason, 42); *Vol. 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches* (Religion and Reason, 43), Berlin — New York: W. de Gruyter, 2004. Approaches and topics/issues are somewhat mixed up in this collection, which is divided according to the following categories: regional, critical, historical, textual, comparative, social-scientific, and cognitive approaches. See the review by M. Stausberg in *Numen* 53 (2006) 238–246.

<sup>22</sup> Being interested in matters of meaning, I shall follow the order of entries suggested by *R*.

<sup>23</sup> Paden has also authored a chapter on “Comparison in the Study of Religion,” in *NA* II 77–92.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. D. McCance, “New Approaches: Literary Theory,” in *NA* II 59–73.

As it happens, *R* is slightly less comprehensive than *B*. However, if economics of religion is such a US-centered enterprise as it appears in Stark's self-centered and outspokenly unrelated contribution to *B* (see comments above), there is no reason to regret its absence from *R*. The chapters on philosophy of religion in both collections remain likewise centered on the "western" tradition, which is regrettable. Still, they come with insightful questions more than with ready-made answers and thus make intellectually challenging reading. As for the chapters on phenomenology — the most contested among the approaches included — they both present a remarkably clear argument and provide a fine panorama of their subject. The presuppositions of philosophical and religious phenomenology are clearly exposed, and controversial issues well identified as such. Allen, the *R* contributor whom Segal would probably range among his "religionists," argues that recent contributions to the phenomenology of religion have been "more sensitive to providing a methodological framework for becoming attentive to the tremendous diversity of the religious voices of others"; that they have become "more self-critical, and more sophisticated in recognizing the complexity, ambiguity, and depth of our diverse modes of givenness"; and that they "tend to be more sensitive to the perspectival and contextual constraints of their approach and more modest in their claims. There is value in uncovering religious essences and structures, but as embodied and contextualized, not as fixed, absolute, ahistorical, eternal truths and meanings." (206) Doesn't this sound as if phenomenology had gone postmodern? The interesting thing about such claims is that in both volumes they find themselves surrounded by their critics, whom interested readers may consult in order to cross-check either argument. Readers can thus make up their mind *en connaissance de cause* and will in any case gain much serious argument to consider, which they should first understand in its real sophistication before criticizing and eventually rejecting it. At the bottom line, it still remains unclear to me how useful it is to ask for "essence" when studying religion as a "scholar of religion." If "essence" can only be defined contextually,

what about contexts where it is not an operative category at all (such as may well be the case in the academic study of religion, at least in a rigorously scientific environment)? Why should scholars not limit themselves to practising historical or social-scientific research which is sensitive to context (both the object's and its own) and open for comparison? What specific contribution can phenomenology make to the academic study of religion, except perhaps, paradoxically, force them to be more explicit about their presuppositions in order precisely not to fall into the traps of essentialism of any kind? However modestly Allen may raise his non-reductionist claims, I find it more reasonable for scholars of religion to acknowledge that all their scientific research is by necessity reductionist in some way, but that the main criterion for the production of scientifically controlled knowledge is that it be argued on the basis of empirical, documented evidence, and that the explanations advanced may, in principle, be falsified (not a very original conclusion, I concede, but at least a practicable one).

There are common omissions of both collections which are either interesting or startling, or both. That neither of the two editors deemed feminist approaches to be worthy of a chapter in its own right (as Connolly had it in 1999) signals a shift in emphasis from engaged scholarship based on hermeneutics of suspicion and a liberationist agenda, toward a more general interest in gender issues that will probably allow male participants to play a more active part in the game. On an even more general level, both companions lack some formal introduction into linguistics, or semiotics, or communication theory with regard to religion. Since religions as much as their students communicate through language, whether on meaning or statistics, primary data or explanations, this would seem to be a useful complement for further editions.<sup>25</sup>

As a historian (and writing this review for a journal committed to a discipline called "History of religions") I am most perplexed

---

<sup>25</sup> See J.S. Jensen, "Meaning and Religion: On Semantics in the Study of Religion," in *NA I* 219–252.

by the sheer *absence of a chapter on historical approaches* to religion. Incidentally, the term “history” does not even figure in the subject index of *R*, as if it were either self-explanatory or irrelevant (Taylor may consider history non-scientific, but his book on critical terms [above, note 3] has at least an entry on “historiography” in the index). One needs not to be nostalgic of mythic origins *in illo tempore* when regretting that history — and some theoretical reflection on what “history” means, what questions it raises, what concepts it uses and how it proceeds to produce explanations — appears to be largely off-screened from the study of religion as it is presented by *R* and *B*. This is startling for several reasons. Many an explanation the general public asks for when addressing a “scholar of religion” on a given topic or issue is historical in nature. The very notion of a religious tradition presupposes history and requires historical research. In German-speaking academia — but having read *R* and *B*, I wonder whether this is not a more general trend — I notice a regrettable tendency among students of religion to con-found factual knowledge about rites and symbols (*Religionskunde*) with history of religion (*Religionsgeschichte*), and however interesting social-scientific studies on religious issues may be, they are also often distressingly naïve when it comes to matters of history, memory and tradition. I have pointed out above that the chapters on comparativism should, in my view, precede the account of the more disciplinary approaches, since all these may be practised in a comparative perspective. The same holds true for history and the historical perspective, which could unfold — on perfectly empirical grounds, since it is based on documentation — as social history, cultural history, history of mentalities, historical anthropology etc. on the condition that it is recognized as a necessary part of the academic study in religion.

When we turn to the topics or key issues addressed in *R&B*, the following table may be drawn up:<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> See above, n. 22.

*B*

Body (Roberts)  
 [cf. *Introduction* (Segal)]  
 Modernity and Postmodernity  
 (Campbell)

Secularization (Bruce)  
 Mysticism (Kripal)  
 Pilgrimage (Coleman)  
 New Religious Movements  
 (Dawson)  
 Fundamentalism (Munson)  
 Myth (Segal) / Ritual (Bell)  
 Death and Afterlife (Davies)  
 Heaven and Hell (Russell)  
 Magic (Benavides)  
 Holy Men/Holy Women  
 (Cunningham)  
 [cf. *Introduction* (Segal)]  
 [cf. *Introduction* (Segal)]  
 Ethics (Davis)  
 Nationalism and Religion  
 (Juergensmeyer)

–  
 –  
 –  
 –  
 –  
 –

*R*

Gender (Juschka)  
 Insider/outsider perspectives (Knott)  
 Postmodernism (Heelas)  
  
 Orientalism and the study of religions (King)  
 Secularization (Fox)  
 Mysticism and spirituality (King)  
 [see below, Religion and geography (Park)]  
 New religious movements (Fox)  
  
 Fundamentalism (Munson)  
 Myth and ritual (Segal)  
 –  
 –  
 – [but see entry in index]  
 Religious authority: scripture, tradition,  
 charisma (Gifford)  
  
 Hermeneutics (Green)  
 Religious pluralism (Barnes)  
 – [but see entry in index]  
 Religion and politics (Moyser)  
 Religion and geography (Park)  
 Religion and science (Dixon)  
 Religion and cognition (Martin)  
 Religion and culture (Hulsether)<sup>27</sup>  
 Religion and the arts (Hinnells)  
 Migration, diaspora and  
 transnationalism (McLoughlin)

---

<sup>27</sup> The same author has written about “New Approaches to the Study of Religion and Culture,” in *NA* I 345–381.



I have mentioned that some obvious issues such as gender, cognition or culture are not discussed in *B* and must be absent on purpose from that collection. Strikingly enough, they figure more or less prominently on the postmodern agenda. In contrast, *R* has taken such issues into account and thus reflects more faithfully the present state of academic debate. The risk of any up-to-date rather than conventional collection is that it cannot always follow the most recent swing of the pendulum. In a future edition, the chapter on orientalism in *R* may perhaps include some thoughts on so-called “inverted orientalism,”<sup>28</sup> or various forms of “occidentalism” as they are now studied in the Middle East, in South and East Asia, and in Africa. It would be easy (but unfair to both editors) to draw up an endless list of subjects that one would wish to see in this section. I shall suggest only six, namely: law (not only “religious law,” or the status of law within religion, but also the status of religion within law systems and the relationship of legislating bodies to religion); education/teaching (again, as an insider issue of transmission and an outsider issue of providing analytical instruments that may help the civil society to deal with religion);<sup>29</sup> media; emotion; sensory perception; and ecology.

I should perhaps end this lengthy review by emphasizing my own peculiar vantage point and the perspective from which I have read the two volumes under review. Having ‘stepped over’ from Biblical studies and the comparative history of ancient Near Eastern religions to *Allgemeine Religionsgeschichte* and *Religionswissenschaft* relatively recently, I find myself in an area that appears to be considerably fragmented. True, many “scholars of religion” or *Religionswissenschaftler* try to integrate anthropology and cultural studies and aim at building bridges between the humanities and the social sciences. However, when looking at the

---

<sup>28</sup> See J. Borup, “Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism: Buddhism, Religious Studies and Interrelated Networks” (*NA* I 451–487).

<sup>29</sup> Although a conspicuously theory-driven journal, *MTSR* has recently addressed this issue, see D. Sarma et al., *MTSR* 17 (2005) 227–286.

various taxonomies operating in the field, which are both history-related and interest-driven, I wonder whether there is anything like a “common ground where all scholars of religion meet,”<sup>30</sup> and whether and how people operating in different disciplines relate to each other in their scholarly discourse. (Such a question may appear slightly out-fashioned, or pre-postmodern, but consider that in continental Europe, there are not as many departments of religion where several colleagues practising clearly different disciplines work alongside each other as in the Anglo-American world; representatives of the field are often just one or two per university, if any.)<sup>31</sup> I also wonder how the study of religion will cope with new developments in neighbouring fields, particularly in view of method and theory, and to what extent new approaches, subjects and insights will gradually transform the canons and standards of our field. In the end, what will make the “study of religion” a coherent field? After all, graduating students will still have the label “study of religion” or a similar one written on their diploma. They should know what it means for them and for the society to which they belong. While these may not be the main questions Segal and Hinnells had in mind when imagining their book’s

---

<sup>30</sup> See Russell McCutcheon, “‘The Common Ground On Which Students of Religion Meet’: Methodology and Theory Within the IAHR”: *Marburg Journal of Religion* 1 (2, 1996) 1–12.

<sup>31</sup> An interesting result of this situation is the fact that companions or introductory textbooks such as the two volumes under review have long taken the genre of *Einleitung* or *Grundzüge* in German scholarship, generally written by individual authors such as Jacques Waardenburg, *Religionen und Religion. Systematische Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft* (Sammlung Götschen 2228), Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986; Fritz Stolz, *Grundzüge der Religionswissenschaft* (UTB 1980), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988, <sup>3</sup>2001; Klaus Hock, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002. Hans Gerhard Kippenberg, Kocku von Stuckrad, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft. Gegenstände und Begriffe*, München: C.H. Beck, 2003 has two authors but is no less idiosyncratic. But see Hartmut Zinser (ed.), *Religionswissenschaft. Eine Einführung*, Berlin: D. Reimer, 1988, and more recently the textbook edited by Figl mentioned above, n. 4.

potential audience, the coherence of an academic field, fragile as it still may be, is certainly a legitimate matter of academic concern and the kind of concern for which one should better ask for some companionship. Companions such as the two books under review bear a particular responsibility for defining the coherence of their subject matter.

Considered from this admittedly interested perspective, *B* comes as an authoritative, solid and sophisticated if somewhat conventional account of how religion has long been and is currently taught and studied at many places in the (western) world. Unfortunately, the book has not too much of an innovative flavour. In contrast, *R* is more original and sometimes even slightly provocative. Its authors leave more room for doubts and debates and hint at alternatives or transformations that are already underway here and there. *R* also addresses more explicitly than *B* the connections between the academic study of religion, its practitioners and the concerns of their host societies. *R* may well be slightly postmodern in that respect, which is certainly not what *B* was designed for. Having consulted both companions and hopefully indicated the major strengths and weaknesses of each in this review, I shall not have to choose between the two books myself. Still, I anticipate that in my future study and teaching I shall seek the company of one more often than the other.

Religionswissenschaftliches Seminar  
Universität Zürich  
Kirchgasse 9  
8001 Zürich  
Switzerland  
Christoph.Uehlinger@access.unizh.ch

CHRISTOPH UEHLINGER

## BOOK REVIEWS

JACCO DIELEMAN, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites. The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE), Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* volume 153 — Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005 (342 p.) ISBN 9004141855. US\$ 122.00.

L'impulsion donnée en 1986 par la publication des *Greek Magical Papyri in translation, including the Demotic Spells*, édités par Hans D. Betz, peut être nettement mesurée aujourd'hui. Ce précieux recueil, associant judicieusement les traductions des textes grecs et démotiques figurant parfois sur les mêmes papyrus, laissait implicitement entendre que pour comprendre le corpus des *PGM* de Preisendanz, il ne s'agissait plus seulement d'analyser de façon séparée les techniques magiques de l'antiquité tardive, mais bien de comprendre la relation entre les imaginaires et les pratiques s'exprimant en grec ou en égyptien. Hasard éditorial, la même année 1986 paraissait le livre fondamental de Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, une enquête socio-culturelle portant sur le « milieu » producteur des textes dits hermétiques. C'est aujourd'hui dans une veine comparable que Jacco Dieleman (dorénavant: JD), soucieux d'analyser sans préjugé le *Sitz im Leben* de ces textes étonnants, propose une riche et savante étude sur un groupe de papyrus magiques d'époque impériale romaine provenant de la région thébaine. Les textes que l'auteur place au centre de son étude — les P. Leiden I 384 (*PGM* XXI / *PDM* xii) et P. Leiden & London (P. Leiden I 383 et P. BM 10070, *PDM* xiv / *PGM* XIV) — sont bien connus et publiés depuis longtemps. Ces textes, qui appartenaient à l'ancienne collection Anastasi, proviennent manifestement d'une « bibliothèque » de magiciens professionnels thébains (douze autres papyri analogues font partie de ce lot). Le P. Leiden & London avait fait l'objet d'une publication célèbre, cosignée par F. LL. Griffith et H. Thompson (*The Leyden Papyrus. An Egyptian Magical Book*, London, 1904), inaugurant un travail que JD, près d'un siècle après, propose de reprendre. Il ne faudrait pas croire cependant que ces textes magiques ont eu bonne presse. Comme le rappelle JD, de nombreux *a priori* ont été plaqués sur ce

corpus (à l'instar de ce que l'on a pu constater en regard des *hermetica*). On s'est plu à considérer ces textes de façon quelque peu hellénocentrique, reléguant sur les marges, comme autant de fioritures, les éléments égyptiens et juifs. Bénéficiant des nettes avancées de la recherche de ces dernières décennies, à la suite notamment des travaux essentiels de J. Johnson, R.K. Ritner et H.-J. Thissen (pour les textes démotiques), des études de R. Merkelbach, F. Graf, C. Faraone, et D. Frankfurter (pour ne citer que quelques jalons importants) pour l'intelligence du corpus des textes magiques, JD entend aborder la bibliothèque magique thébaine pour ce qu'elle est réellement, c'est-à-dire un ensemble de textes bilingues grecs et égyptiens. Selon l'auteur (11), c'est là une « opportunité unique » pour étudier la religion, la langue et le phénomène d'acculturation dont témoignent ces textes. Le but visé est de définir l'horizon culturel des producteurs de ces papyrus, c'est-à-dire celui de personnages usant alternativement du grec, du démotique, du vieux-copte, dans un milieu sacerdotal égyptien. Le second chapitre est consacré à une présentation matérielle des sources. On notera que le recto du P. Leiden I 384 consigne le célèbre « Mythe de l'œil du soleil » écrit en démotique, fait qui montre quels pouvaient être les autres intérêts du propriétaire antique du document. Au verso, le manuscrit (3,60 m × 22 cm) présente 29 formules magiques, dont 8 en démotique, et 2 en démotique et en grec. Le P. London Leiden (5 m × 24 cm) est quant à lui presque entièrement écrit en démotique, et conserve 29 colonnes sur le recto et 33 colonnes, plus courtes, au verso, consignant 98 formules. L'examen du *ductus* démotique confirme qu'il s'agit de la même main qui a également écrit le P. Leiden I 384, ce qui n'est pas le cas en ce qui concerne les quelques sections grecques. La question de la datation précise pose évidemment de nombreux problèmes, rendus d'autant plus ardues que les critères paléographiques retenus pour les textes copiés en grec ou en démotique n'orientent pas d'emblée vers les mêmes fourchettes chronologiques. JD en arrive à la conclusion que les manuscrits ont été copiés après le début 2<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C., et avant le milieu du 3<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'examen linguistique du démotique tend en revanche à montrer que les textes ont été composés probablement au premier siècle. Après avoir exposé ces aspects formels, l'auteur entreprend (chapitre 3) l'examen des différentes écritures employées dans ces documents: grec et démotique, mais aussi hiératique, démotique alphabétique, vieux-copte, et écriture cryptographique. La combinaison entre démotique et hiératique

est un phénomène assez remarquable, et dénote la familiarité du scribe avec les textes rituels (écrits traditionnellement en hiératique). La question des gloses des *voces magicae*, en démotique et hiératique, est ensuite abordée. Ces suites de noms aux étranges résonances sont transcrites, au cœur des formules démotiques, soit en alphabet consonantique démotique ou en vieux-copte, ce qui montre que le rédacteur devait les considérer comme émanant d'une langue étrangère, alors même que certains de ces noms proviennent manifestement du vieux fonds magique égyptien (par exemple les théonymes PHTHA, RA, etc.). La transcription de ces *voces magicae* a d'ailleurs posé au scribe différents problèmes de transcriptions, qui tendent à prouver que le manuscrit d'origine devait être écrit en grec (ainsi l'écriture du théonyme PHTHA, passe par une transcription du Phta grecque, et non directement du *Pth* égyptien). Ainsi le rédacteur, visiblement peu conscient des étymologies, aurait transcrit en démotique des termes grecs provenant eux-mêmes de transcriptions de l'égyptien. Les cas de l'usage de ABRASAX, de IAO (vocalisation du tétragramme Yhwh), sont ensuite étudiés par JD, avant d'aborder (chap. 3.4) la question des écritures « secrètes » ou chiffrées. Recherchant à ce propos des prototypes égyptiens, JD évoque la cryptographie hiéroglyphique, laquelle témoigne de tels usages dans un cadre pharaonique ancien. L'usage d'écritures secrètes et chiffrées (dans le P. London Leiden) témoigne d'une veine similaire: il s'agit de coder les informations pour en soustraire la teneur aux « non-initiés »; un alphabet idiosyncratique de 36 signes est utilisé pour écrire certains mots (chap. 3.4.1.). Parallèlement, le texte fait usage de *charaktères*, c'est-à-dire de dessins, insérés dans le texte, dont certains dérivent des hiéroglyphes.

Le chapitre 4 est consacré à la question du bilinguisme. L'association de formules en grec et en démotique sur le même manuscrit est la caractéristique la plus remarquable du corpus. Alors que différentes indications permettent de croire que l'affirmation identitaire de certains membres du clergé égyptien pouvait passer par un rejet de la langue grecque, les textes magiques offrent au contraire, selon JD, un exemple patent de bilinguisme, ouvrant une brèche dans les pratiques usuelles. Il y a ici peut-être lieu de nuancer: la question de la réception de la culture grecque dans les élites égyptiennes (à commencer par Manéthon), offre à différents degrés un nombre appréciable d'exemples montrant que les interpénétrations les plus diverses ont pu se produire (voir par exemple Ph. Derchain, *RdE* 41,

1990, 9–30). Il s'agit pour JD d'examiner les « formes et les degrés d'interférence » (104) d'un bilinguisme à la lumière des acquis modernes de la socio-linguistique, selon une méthode sensible aux phénomènes d'insertions, d'alternance, et de congruence lexicale. Cette approche implique de cerner les situations de contact et les groupes sociaux concernés, en suivant notamment, en ce qui concerne l'Égypte tardive, les travaux de Willy Clarysse. L'attitude des scribes égyptiens vis-à-vis du grec est susceptible d'orienter vers des questions débordant le cadre de la linguistique. En effet, le vocabulaire démotique paraît nettement pauvre en influence hellénique: les scribes préfèrent traduire plutôt que translitérer. L'insertion de mots dérivés du grec n'y apparaît en fait qu'à fins administratives (question des « loanwords »). Mais en ce qui concerne les textes magiques étudiés par JD, la situation est quelque peu différente: un nombre proportionnellement plus élevé qu'à l'ordinaire de mots grecs est intégré dans les textes démotiques. L'auteur observe ce phénomène dans différentes catégories (« loanwords », vocabulaire médical, etc.), et remarque la présence particulièrement intéressante de mixité (par exemple la phrase *jw=s n jwn n k'l'yne* (< *kalainè*) « c'est de couleur bleu-verte ». Ces éléments contribuent encore à confirmer l'idée de la variété des sources compilées lors de la mise en écrit des textes en question, lesquels résultent en ce que JD considère comme un curieux amalgame hétérogène. L'idée souvent soutenue de l'attitude a priori négative des prêtres égyptiens « nationalistes » face à la culture grecque doit aussi être reconsidérée en regard de la présence d'invocations en langue grecque insérées dans le texte. Toujours dans ce chapitre, JD poursuit par l'examen des invocations à Typhon-Seth, fortement ancrées dans les pratiques rituelles égyptiennes, puis s'intéresse au thème de la « peur de la Nubie », le pays de Koush, célèbre pour ses magiciens redoutés, qui véhicule l'image exotique d'une terre des sortilèges.

Le chapitre 5 se consacre plus particulièrement aux textes du corpus écrits uniquement en grec. Ces formules, quoique visant des buts similaires à celles écrites en démotiques, témoignent néanmoins d'une complexité thématique plus grande encore, car elles puisent de façon large dans des données culturelles impliquant l'ensemble du monde gréco-oriental. Si des influences culturelles multiples sont manifestes, en revanche, au niveau linguistique, la mixité constatée dans les formules écrites en égyptien n'est en général pas attestée. Il existe pourtant quelques excep-

tions: ainsi le titre écrit en grec et en démotique du *PGM* XII.201–269 (une formule de consécration d'un anneau d'or sur laquelle s'arrête l'auteur). L'analyse de la rhétorique des formules grecques est abordée par l'examen minutieux de plusieurs formules: une prière adressée aux « trois soleils » IAÔ-SABAÔTH-ABRASAX (*PGM* XII.216–269), c'est-à-dire à une figure cosmothéiste du *pantocrator*. Le paysage théologique qui se dessine ici est fortement imprégné des conceptions cosmographiques égyptiennes (circuit du soleil passant par le ventre de la déesse du ciel Nout pour renaître au matin). La question des influences de la vision égyptienne du monde, de sa cosmologie, est ensuite abordée en détail (152 sq.). Comme le rappelle JD, la diffusion des arétologies isiaques avait popularisé depuis longtemps le fait que les Égyptiens étaient détenteurs par excellence du *verum nomen*, ce nom divin secret, source de puissance et de pouvoir, dont les magiciens sont précisément en quête. Une quête « internationale » si l'on peut dire, où est mise à contribution le langage, la sagesse, le savoir-faire magique réputé non seulement des Égyptiens, mais encore des Syriens, des Perses, ou des Hébreux. Un assemblage qui transcende les limites géographiques, culturelles ou ethniques, au service d'une vision universaliste de la divinité.

Un autre cas discuté est celui de l'appropriation (et de la réélaboration) d'un vieux rite égyptien: « l'ouverture de la bouche » devient *Ouphôr* (transcription grecque du mot égyptien *wp-r3*), objet d'une étude précédente par I. Moyer et J. Dieleman, *JANER* 3 (2003), pp. 47–72. Dans le *PGM* XII.316–322, le rite *Ouphôr* est réputé pour avoir été pratiqué par un certain Ourbikos (nom peut-être dérivé de l'égyptien *Hr-bjk* « Horus-le-faucon »); la formule grecque est une étonnante adaptation du rite égyptien, et en connaît explicitement les traditionnelles implications culturelles: l'animation des images, le don de vie aux statues; ainsi les *plasmata*, les *gluphai*, les *xoana* sont tour à tour susceptibles d'être animés par le rite *Ouphôr*. Le rite comprend plusieurs invocations: la première met en jeu la notion de « souffle » (*pneuma*, *pnoè*) qui, en quelque sorte, joue fonctionnellement un rôle analogue au *ba* égyptien; la seconde livre une liste litanique de quinze *voces magicae*, précédée répétitivement des mots EI IEOU, que l'on peut considérer comme une transcription de l'égyptien *j j3w* « Ô, salut! ». Cette formule directement adaptée de l'égyptien introduit des théonymes qui, pour la plupart, le sont également (par ex: Sôkhousôrsôê, Amounêi Ousiri). Le rite *Ouphôr* apparaît ainsi



comme une version adaptée (« cheap and easily performed ritual » (182) d'un rite de tradition égyptienne: une imitation.

Le chapitre 6 entend développer encore les questions socio-culturelles posées par ces textes. Il s'agit, pour l'essentiel, de cerner le milieu producteur de ces écrits. Après un examen des données pharmacologiques et botaniques, sous forme d'un long excursus, JD s'arrête sur le monde des prêtres égyptiens de l'époque tardive, sur leur hiérarchie et leur position en regard de l'administration ptolémaïque puis romaine, sur leur spécificité et leur champ d'action. Cette partie conduit JD à amplifier considérablement l'exemplification de son propos, puisqu'il évoque, en fin de compte, de façon synthétique, presque toute l'histoire de la magie égyptienne, du cycle du papyrus Westcar jusqu'aux « livres de Thot », en passant par la figure littéraire de Setné (sur laquelle JD s'attarde, 227–238). Ce long voyage dans la magie égyptienne l'amène enfin à envisager la constitution de l'image stéréotypée, qui se construit aux époques hellénistiques puis romaines, du mage égyptien (dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Apulée avec l'égyptien Zatchlas, ou avec Pankratès, dans le *Philopseudès* de Lucien). On en arrive inévitablement à Philostrate et à sa *Vie d'Apollonius de Tyane*. L'ensemble de ce dossier témoigne d'une vision du magicien, figée, rigide même, voire péjorative, en forte opposition avec la vision traditionnelle égyptienne. Les points de concordance existent cependant: le portrait-type du magicien oriental retient de son modèle non seulement le costume, mais aussi quelques idées-clés, comme la notion de connaissance basée sur la consultation des livres, et de savoir secret. Rejoignant les vues de D. Frankfurter, JD décèle des mécanismes d'action / réaction complexes qui se tissent entre milieux culturels. Ainsi, les prêtres égyptiens se seraient adaptés à l'attente « touristique »: ils offrent d'eux-mêmes l'image que l'on attend d'eux dans une grille grecque. Revenant ensuite plus directement aux *PGM*, JD se penche sur leur rhétorique, et tente de cerner le type de lecteur, ou de public, auquel ils s'adressent. La question de l'établissement de l'autorité du texte magique repose sur des procédés: une origine divine ou un auteur fameux (pseudépigraphie); une authenticité du message soigneusement entretenue; des preuves d'efficacité; un accent sur la notion de secret. Ces textes ont pu être transmis, dit-on, par des dieux: Osiris, Helios Mithra, Hermès Trismégiste, ou les Olympiens; parfois, le texte est attribué au talent d'un dieu (Apollon, Imhotep, Nephthys); plus souvent encore, c'est un auteur

légendaire qui est invoqué, quelque magicien plus ou moins illustre, un philosophe comme Démocrite, un pharaon Darius, un mage perse comme Ostanès, ou encore le fameux Manéthon: une véritable collaboration internationale. Reprenant un motif fort anciennement attesté en Egypte, les *PGM* évoquent aussi la découverte fictive des textes sur quelque stèle cachée et sacrée, dans le secret d'un temple égyptien, voire directement dans les archives d'Hermès. Enfin, pour établir définitivement l'efficacité de ces formules, des certifications sont fréquemment ajoutées, pour vanter la recette, parfois à l'aide de témoins ou d'anecdotes. Les injonctions pour garder le secret, étrangement absentes des documents démotiques, achèvent d'établir l'autorité des formules, induisant l'idée du secret initiatique. On remarquera pour finir la forte présence d'éléments culturels provenant de la tradition juive, tels les mentions du roi Salomon, et les différentes références bibliques, qui s'expliquent également par le prestige de la magie juive. JD constate une certaine divergence entre textes démotiques et grecs: en effet, dans les textes démotiques, les références ne sont jamais « internationales »: tout se passe comme si le public visé n'était pas le même.

Le 7<sup>e</sup> et dernier chapitre, conclusion de l'ouvrage, porte sur la question de la transmission de ces textes. Les corpus grec et démotique usent chacun de motifs qui tirent leurs sources des anciennes pratiques magiques égyptiennes, mais n'utilisent pas de la même façon cet héritage. Or, il faut réaliser que les scribes des textes grec et démotique étaient manifestement tous des égyptiens, des membres du clergé. Ils n'ont pas hésité à livrer, en grec, une vision hellénisée et exotique du savoir égyptien. Ils se sont ainsi livrés à un travail d'adaptation, en « mimant » l'image du magicien égyptien que leur renvoyait l'élite hellénistique. Il faut en outre garder à l'esprit le fait souligné par R. Bagnall: le choix de la langue dépend essentiellement de circonstances, et ne reflète pas l'ethnicité ou la culture du rédacteur. C'est évidemment le propre d'une société bilingue, et biculturelle. Les invocations écrites en grecques dérivent du même savoir cléricale que celles en démotique. La dernière question posée concerne la date initiale de composition des formules; les critères formels grammaticaux et orthographiques ne sont pas d'une grande aide. Quoi qu'il en soit, ces textes émergent très probablement vers la fin de la période hellénistique déjà. JD imagine finalement le modèle suivant: à un moment indéterminé du début de l'époque romaine, des prêtres thébains eurent connaissance,

suite à leurs voyages dans différentes cités grecques d’Égypte, de textes magiques grecs. A leur retour à Thèbes, ils entreprirent de rédiger à leur tour des textes en démotique, dans une veine comparable, sans être parfaitement identique: c’est-à-dire une adaptation et non une traduction. Plus tard, au cours du 2<sup>e</sup> siècle ou du 3<sup>e</sup> siècle, un scribe aurait copié sur le même papyrus des formules grecques, composées pour un public helléno-phoné, et les textes démotiques, deux corpus qui sont finalement deux réalisations différentes d’un même phénomène.

Plusieurs appendices, une bibliographie, des indexes, et des planches clôturent ce volume, que lira avec grand profit tout historien des religions qui s’intéresse non seulement à l’histoire des pratiques rituelles, de la magie, et de la culture antique, mais aussi, plus largement, aux phénomènes anthropologiques de rencontres interculturelles, de mixité et d’acculturation.

Université de Genève  
Fac. des lettres  
Dép. des Sciences de l’Antiquité  
Rue Candolle 3  
1200 Genève  
Switzerland  
Youri.Volokhine@lettres.unige.ch

YOURI VOLOKHINE

JONATHAN ROPER, ed. *Charms and Charming in Europe* — New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. (256 + x p.) ISBN 140393925X (hb.) US\$ 79.95.

Where does the researcher with a new magical inscription, papyrus, demon-bowl, or lead tablet go for a capsule description of how such a thing might “work” and what kind of person might pronounce or write it? An enormous and uneven scholarship on the linguistic, ritual, and historical aspects of magical texts is scattered among conference volumes and journal articles (see my review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2005: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2005/2005-05-32.html>), while books sporting definitive titles like *Byzantine Magic* or *Arcana Mundi* are either idiosyncratic or of little interpretive value for new texts. The field needs a theoretical “manual,” as it were, for the study of ancient magical texts,

not so much to decode strings of magical syllables or obscure mythological references as to lay out how magical spells work in context. What kinds of people, for example, are usually envisioned as authorities in the uttering of spells? How does speech become efficacious or powerful? What does it mean to draw on myths for personal concerns? What is the relationship between oral performances of magic and written spell-manuals? And how do we describe the dynamic interplay between institutional tradition and local lore in the formulation of ritual speech?

Despite the price this little collection offers the best and most accessible picture of the context of magical spells — whether in oral or textual transmission, whether to bind or to heal, whether Christian or hybrid. The authors are folklorists, historians, and manuscript specialists, and they show a pronounced sensitivity to the cultural and performative realities of spell-casting. At the same time, while rarely basing their theoretical positions explicitly in anthropological classics like Malinowski and Tambiah, the authors show a remarkable sophistication in handling the materials and social worlds of magic — perhaps because they focus on “charms and charming” rather than “magic and religion.” The model of speech-acts and illocutionary declarations developed by J.L. Austin and John Searle seems to provide an implicit background to many of the papers as well.

The volume is divided in two parts: a series of thematic essays on “Issues in Charms and Charming” and a series on particular corpora, “National Traditions,” many of which essays contain invaluable general insights as well. Following a brief overview of the volume by Roper, the editor (“Introduction,” 1–7), T.M. Smallwood’s essay on “The Transmission of Charms in English, Medieval and Modern” (11–31) focuses on the historical compilation, probably in monastic milieux, of written charm manuals, as well as the parallel transmission of spells, sometimes orally and sometimes with knowledge of the manuals, among cunning men and other local specialists. David Elton Gay writes “On the Christianity of the Incantations” (32–46), pushing beyond archaic dichotomies of “paganism” vs. “Christianity” and the identification of so-called survivals to capture the broad and eclectic resources on which local charmers draw consciously under the aegis of Christianity.

Henni Ilomäki’s “The Self of a Charm” (47–58) offers an important analysis of how the speaker, whether expert or client, enters the strong

and commanding first-person-singular declaratives of which many written spells are constructed. Some might recall here Bronislaw Malinowski's picture of the Trobriand ritual expert putting himself in an emotional state (*Magic, Science and Religion* [New York 1948], pp. 70–72), while the historian of ancient religions would be reminded of the cosmic threats that traditionally propelled many Egyptian priestly spells — the priest assuming the role of potential disruptor of the cosmos (see Yvan Koenig, *Magie et magiciens dans l'Égypte ancienne* [Paris 1994], pp. 69–75). Ilomäki uses a Russian case-study to show that ritual performances involve a shift from the everyday self “to a ritually constructed I, which is independent from experiences gained from social interaction and communication” (55–56).

The last essay in Part One, Lea Olsan's “Charms in Medieval Memory” (59–88), analyzes the interplay in the construction of a charm story or *historiola*, between immediate medical symptoms on the one hand, and authoritative language, imagery, or characters on the other. For Olsan, composition begins with the symptom or problem, whence the charmer seeks out pertinent motifs from tradition — pertinent, that is, to some feature of the symptom, like blood dripping or worms crawling, rather than the problem in the abstract. One is reminded of Tambiah's description of “persuasive analogies,” whereby one compares, e.g., the undilated cervix in childbirth to a series of gates, not out of some general theory of obstetrics but so that the “opening” feature of the gate might be transferred “persuasively” to the womb (Stanley Tambiah, “Form and Meaning of Magical Acts,” *Culture, Thought, and Social Action* [Cambridge, 1985], pp. 60–86). Olsan's is certainly the most useful contribution to the *historiola* in recent scholarship (cf. my own “Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the *Historiola*,” *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Meyer/Mirecki [Leiden 1995], pp. 457–76).

The essays in Part Two, while focused on particular cultures' charm corpora, manage still to offer useful general insights or *comparanda* for the researcher in ancient magic. Owen Davies' “French Charmers and Their Healing Charms” (91–112) is especially helpful on the relationship between texts and the oral culture of charm-experts. He observes that actual categories of speech drawn from liturgical tradition — *prières*, *oraisons* — are used to classify (and denote the intrinsic efficacy of) charms as well, underscoring the agency of popular culture in appropriating institutional religious forms. W.F. Ryan's “Eclecticism in the Russian

Charm Tradition" (113–27) examines the procedures by which Christian saints' legends get woven with some quite archaic traditions in protective charms. Once again we can see the profit for the study of magic and folklore that comes from avoiding strict "pagan" vs. "Christian" dichotomies and taking seriously instead that bricolages of tradition arise in the face of practical concerns.

Jonathan Roper's "Typologising English Charms" (128–40) seeks to shift the actual classification of charms from spheres of function — healing, protective, childbirth, etc., as many practical and academic spell collections are organized — instead to "charm-types": that is, the *historiolae* themselves, like the one about Jesus and the river Jordan that Roper shows to have considerable antiquity. Many of these charm types were passed down over centuries in verse or prose, Latin or vernacular, with various applications. Such a form-based classification would allow the tracing of variations over time and space but carries the potential to essentialize the type, conjuring a pure or original form from which variants diverge. Sanda Golopentia's "Towards a Typology of Romanian Love Charms" (145–87) gets overly complicated with new terminology and an ineffective use of examples but has value for its attention to the actual performance of love spells, looking at the interaction of local expert, client, verbal charm and its accompanying sequence of gestures. Golopentia points out, for example, that the gestures to which many magical spells refer, especially those spells developed for the advantage of women, may stem from simple domestic acts like turning a pot or combing hair (181).

The last two essays lie on the periphery of the subject of charms. Ulrika Wolf-Knuts outlines the ethnographic methods of one of Sweden's premier folklorists in "Swedish Finn Incantations: Valter W. Forsblom on Charms and Charming" (188–204); while Éva Pócs examines traditions of the "Evil Eye in Hungary: Belief, Ritual, Incantation" (205–27). Hers is probably the most thorough ethnographic discussion of European evil eye beliefs to be found; but the few charms she uses serve not to examine apotropaic magic but rather as witnesses to a wider, more subtle belief system based in the social management of envy.

The volume includes an index; but given the varying terminology of the contributors it has only moderate value for cross-referencing the various thematic contributions of the book's authors.

Admittedly, the remains of ancient Mediterranean magic are almost entirely textual, reflecting the folklore and compositional strategies of local *literati*, from rabbis and monks to lawyers and scribes. Our ancient magical texts also reflect, at least by the Roman period, the general authority of books — from Psalms and Gospels to the *Testament of Solomon* and the Abgar legend — as sources for the innovation of charms and spells. Magic, it would seem, was a basically literary phenomenon. And yet even around these texts flowed a lively folklore about biblical figures, Greek and Egyptian gods, and the flora and fauna (and even metals and stones) of the landscape. This folklore was liberally drawn upon, in both domestic and institutional settings, to construct charms and *historiolae*, persuasive analogies, gestures, instruments, and self-declarations — all the components from which ritual efficacy might be derived. Articles like those in this volume show the dynamics of weaving efficacy out of the traditions and materials of the immediate culture and in various settings: under the tutelage of ritual experts, in the company of friends or family, and maybe with a book at hand. These are dynamics to which all students of magic should pay close attention in situating their primary texts and expanding their sense of ritual in history.

Religious Studies

DAVID FRANKFURTER

Horton Social Science Center  
University of New Hampshire  
20 College Road  
Durham, NH 03824  
USA  
davidTf@unh.edu

EINAR THOMASSEN, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians"* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, Volume 60) — Leiden and Boston: Brill 2006 (xvi+545 p.) ISBN 90 04 14802 7. € 129.00/ US\$ 174.00.

The period since François Sagnard's *La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de Saint Irénée* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1947) has seen many noteworthy studies devoted to various aspects of Valentinianism, or to individual sources or teachers, including Valentinus himself.

However, Einar Thomassen's *The Spiritual Seed* is the first book-length attempt since Sagnard's at a comprehensive account of the Valentinian tradition. And of course Thomassen has been able to take into account the evidence from the Nag Hammadi codices discovered in 1945 but only gradually accessible to scholars over succeeding decades.

Thomassen's analysis is a model of thoroughly researched scholarship, caution in the development of hypotheses, and general clarity in presentation. Most of this hefty volume is organized around an exploration of three interrelated dimensions of Valentinian theology: soteriology, protology and ritual. Part I is devoted to the first, Part II discusses the interrelationship of all three, and Parts III and IV deal with protology and ritual, respectively. In Part V Thomassen turns to the question of what might be conjectured about Valentinus's own teachings based on fragments from his works cited by early Christian authors and the relationship of these to later Valentinian sources; and then the section concludes with an overall sketch of "fragments of the history of Valentinianism."

In his analysis of Valentinian soteriology Thomassen employs views about the nature of the Savior's body and incarnation as his touchstone. Essentially he tests the assertion, originating in patristic sources (e.g., Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 6.35.5–7) and repeated often in scholarly literature, that there were two "schools" or branches of Valentinianism, an eastern school and an "Italian" or western school. Thomassen argues that Valentinian soteriology can indeed be analyzed into two such basic patterns, and in the remainder of the book he contends that protological, and to some extent ritual, doctrines also broadly confirm the existence of these two basic types, and that the "eastern" version represents a more primitive stage closer to the teaching of Valentinus himself. Thomassen finds the "eastern" type of soteriology in the teacher Theodotus (in excerpts quoted by Clement of Alexandria) as well as in the Nag Hammadi tractates *Tripartite Tractate*, *Treatise on the Resurrection*, *Interpretation of Knowledge*, and *the Gospel of Philip*. (Indeed, he eventually comments that *all* Valentinian tractates from Nag Hammadi seem to be of eastern Valentinian provenance [502].) He argues that common to this type is a "soteriology of mutual participation" in which the Savior "shares the condition of the spirituals he comes to save, is incarnated in a body, suffers, and needs to be redeemed himself through being baptised" (81). The "western" type is represented by most of the



variant Valentinian systems reported by Irenaeus in his *Adversus haereses* (Thomassen thinks that Irenaeus refers to at least twelve different Valentinian sources), by a section in Clement's *Excerpts from Theodotus* (43.2–65) not deriving from Theodotus himself, and by Hippolytus's report (*Ref.* 6.29–36). In this type the spirituals do not need salvation (or are “saved by nature”) and hence there is no need for suffering by the Savior or for his redemption. Instead, the emphasis is shifted to the salvation of the psychics — but now salvation by a psychic Christ who is distinguished from the spiritual Savior. In spite of the fact that the teachers Ptolemy and Heracleon are assigned by Hippolytus to the “western” school, Thomassen contends that in fact Ptolemy in his *Letter to Flora* (quoted by Epiphanius) and Heracleon (fragments quoted by Origen) both manifest a soteriology in many respects closer to the more primitive “eastern” type.

Thomassen discerns a generally parallel typology among Valentinian protologies: (a) He argues that the older type was an “eastern” version, in which the aeons exist initially inside the Father and the Pleroma is not fully unfolded until the eschatological return of spiritual humans, and in which there is only one Sophia-type figure, who is left outside the Pleroma when her son Christ reascends. The primary examples Thomassen discusses are the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Tripartite Tractate* (146–90). He sees a theological correlation between the theme attested in this version of compassionate emanation from unity into multiplicity, and the “eastern” incarnational soteriology of mutual participation mentioned above (188–89). (b) He identifies a derivative “western” type of protology involving a hierarchically emanated series of thirty aeons, and in which the Pleroma is consummated already at the protological stage with the restoration of Sophia. He contends that a variation of this western type evolved to include a doctrine of *two* Sophias, in which only the first Sophia is restored to the Pleroma. One or the other variation of the “western” type is attested, according to Thomassen (193–247), in numerous systems reported by Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Epiphanius, in a section in *Exc. Theod.* 6–7.3, and in a portion of the Nag Hammadi *Valentinian Exposition* (though other passages in the latter work, he thinks, witness the “eastern” type of protology). He finds it, particularly in its two-Sophia version, to be theologically correlated to the “western” soteriological

model in which the salvation of the spiritual seed is already assured by the restoration of Sophia early on in salvation history (260–61).

The extensive discussion of ritual (333–414) concludes that Valentinian ritual acts must have conformed in most respects to general patterns in ancient Christian ritual at large, though Valentinian ritual was not completely uniform. Water baptism was in most cases central, followed by one or more post-immersion anointings and a baptismal eucharist. Differences from proto-catholic Christian ritual lay not so much in the acts themselves as in the terminology and ideology (401) — e.g., the developed use of the terms “redemption” (*apolytrôsis*) and/or “bridal chamber” in connection with baptism. More distinctive is the ritual for the dying mentioned in Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.21.5 and the *First Apocalypse of James* 32,28–35,25 — passages that Thomassen believes derive ultimately from a common document. He even locates this ritual within only one particular form of Valentinian tradition, arguing that it reflects the assumption (in several “western”-type sources) that the spiritual is saved due to origin and essence and has no need of any redemptive act performed by the Savior nor mutual participation in such an act by baptism (411).

The discussion of Valentinus himself is concentrated mostly on the few short fragments from his writings quoted by Clement and Hippolytus (430–490). However, Thomassen also grants a certain weight to a “lowest common denominator” approach, by which general features of Valentinus’s teachings are hypothetically approximated from aspects in the common “family likeness” among various Valentinian systems (426–429). This is a significant difference from the provocative study by Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus?* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992). Valentinus’s brief fragments are notoriously enigmatic, but where Markschies more often finds no basis for linkage to later Valentinian myth or doctrine, Thomassen more frequently finds no justification for ruling out continuity, especially with “eastern” Valentinian tradition. He believes Valentinus’s soteriology was inclusive, with no distinction between the status of spirituals and psychics, and that his protological ideas were consistent with the more archaic type mentioned above. Thomassen’s resistance to Markschies’s sharp separation of Valentinianism from Valentinus’s own teachings is effectively argued and a significant addition to this lively debate.

Thomassen's valuable study provides a fresh perspective on Valentinianism that attempts both to delineate abiding or core features in this tradition but at the same time to do justice to, and account for, some dynamics in its evolution. The book brings into much clearer relief several paradoxes and tensions in Valentinian doctrine and practice in ways that hold genuine potential for advancing future discussion well beyond old stereotypes. For example, in his treatment of ritual and its relation to soteriology and protology, Thomassen is particularly interested in the "crucial role" (333) of the dialectics between the physicality of ritual performance and the immateriality of its symbolic significance. Why should Valentinians have felt that spiritual power would require a physical medium to become effective? Thomassen's answer lies essentially in the correlation of the physicality of the ritual (e.g., literal baptism) with the "mutual participation" of the Savior in the materiality of the incarnation (e.g., 143). As one reads Thomassen's impressive expostulation of this case, however, the thought occurs that the "paradox" he finds in this double character of Valentinian ritual (both a symbolic and real transformation — 142) might be said to be inherent in most ritual in general. Certainly it is hard to see much difference on this score from, e.g., Pauline language about baptism as burial with Christ. Beyond even what he may have intended, Thomassen's discussion of Valentinian ritual helps us understand the normality of its dynamic *qua* ritual — rather than something caricatured as statically alien.

Similarly, Thomassen's extensive and multi-faceted treatment of a "mutual participation" model of salvation in Valentinianism helps clarify how, although logically an apparent contradiction, the notion of a pre-established identity of the saved can co-exist with a salvation historical perspective that takes seriously conversion and the necessity of transformation in ritual (174). Indeed, although Thomassen could be correct in his theory of an evolution from a more primitive "eastern" Valentinianism that maintained this paradoxical tension in the salvation of the "spirituals," to a "western" version in which one could have encountered language of spirituals already "saved by nature," it is nevertheless striking how this alleged "western" version is almost entirely limited, according to Thomassen's own analysis, to reports from heresiologists (the sole exception possibly being *Exc. Theod.* 43.2–65, which could be an extensive fragment from a Valentinian source). Virtually all of the Nag Hammadi evidence, as well as extensive quotations of original writings (such as

Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, or Heracleon's fragments, as mentioned above), represent views more closely aligned with the "eastern" tradition, according to Thomassen. Thus, even though he makes an attractive case for the correlation between a shift in focus to salvation for psychics and corresponding protological innovations such as a second Sophia, we need at least to ask how well heresiologists understood accompanying language about the status and salvation of pneumatics — e.g., whether even in "western" circles some sense of contingency remained. Thomassen himself notes (65–68) that the language pertaining to the salvation of the "spiritual" in *Exc. Theod.* 43.2–65 has obscurities about it — precisely the "western" source where we might be dealing with direct quotation rather than heresiological paraphrase. And his general observation on p. 478, that there is "an important ambiguity in Valentinian anthropology: the question of whether all humans potentially possess the spiritual seed," touches on a most significant point worthy of far more attention in future research. Most past treatments of this question, as with the related issue of the theological role of incarnation in these circles, probably reveal a "typical blind spot in the perception of Valentinian soteriology" attributable to "ingrained, but indefensible, preconceptions . . ." (85, n. 4).

Thomassen's study provides a comprehensive survey offering numerous insights that could offer subsequent scholarship opportunities to get past such blind spots. In thinking of the challenge he faced in composing his account, he mentions the metaphor of a jigsaw puzzle with many missing pieces (1). Inevitably, others would have and will arrange many of these pieces rather differently, but this book is a rich effort that will hugely benefit discussion and debate about one of the more interesting traditions in ancient Christianity.

Comparative Religion Program  
Jackson School of International Studies, and  
Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilization  
University of Washington  
Box 353650  
Seattle, WA 98195–3650  
USA  
maw@u.washington.edu

MICHAEL A. WILLIAMS

## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

### *Periodicals*

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS, 44 (2005), 3

*Adam H. Becker*, Doctoring the Past in the Present: E.A. Wallis Budge, The Discourse on Magic, and the Colonization of Iraq

*Mathew N. Schmalz*, Dalit Catholic Tactics of Marginality at a North Indian Mission

*Thomas A. Tweed*, Marking Religion's Boundaries: Constitutive Terms, Orienting Tropes, and Exegetical Fussiness

JAPANESE JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES. Essays from the XIXth World Congress of the IAHR, Tokyo, March 2005, 32 (2005), 2

THE JOURNAL OF RELIGION, 85 (2005), 2

### *Books*

Cole, Alan, *Text as Father: Paternal Seductions in Early Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature*. Series: Buddhisms, 9 — Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2005, xiii+356 p., ISBN 0-520-24276-9 (hb.).

Einoo, Shingo, and Jun Takashima, *From Material to Deity: Indian Rituals of Consecration*. Series: Japanese Studies on South Asia, 4 — New Delhi, Manohar, 2005, 333 p., ISBN 81-7304-627-1 (hb.).

Gaddis, Michael, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*. Series: The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 39 — Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2005, xiv+396 p., ISBN 0-520-24104-5 (hb.).

Knighton, Ben, *The Vitality of Karamajong Religion: Dying Tradition or Living Faith?* Series: Vitality of Indigenous Religions — Aldershot (Hampshire), Ashgate, 2005, xvi+366 p., £ 55.00, ISBN 0-7546-0383-0 (hb.).

Kouamé, Nathalie, *Le sabre et l'encens: Ou comment les fonctionnaires du fief de Mito présentent dans un "Registre des destructions" daté de l'an 1666 l'audacieuse politique religieuse de leur Seigneur Tokugawa Mitsukuni* — Paris, Collège de France (Institut des Hautes Etudes

- Japonaises), diffusion: De Boccard, 2005, 141 p., ISBN 2-913217-12-5 (pbk.).
- Langer, Ruth, and Steven Fine (eds.), *Liturgy in the Life of the Synagogue. Studies in the History of Jewish Prayer*. Series: Duke Judaic Studies, 2 — Winona Lake (Indiana), Eisenbrauns, 2005, xii+280 p., ISBN 1-57506-097-3 (hb.).
- Levinson, Bernard M., *L'Herméneutique de l'innovation: Canon et exégèse dans l'Israël biblique*, avant-propos de Jean-Louis Ska — Bruxelles, Editions Lessius, Le livre et le rouleau, 2005, 101 p., ISBN 2-87299-146-8 (pbk.).
- Lopez Jr., Donald S., *The Madman's Middle Way: Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gendun Chopel*. Series: Buddhism and Modernity — Chicago, London, The University of Chicago Press, 2006, xii+258 p., US\$ 22.50, ISBN 0-226-08900-2 (hb.).
- Magill, Kevin J., *Julian of Norwich: Mystic or visionary?* Series: Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture — New York, London, Routledge, 2006, viii+180 p., ISBN 0-415-36053-6 (hb.).
- Modéus, Martin, *Sacrifice and Symbol: Biblical Šlāmîm in a Ritual Perspective*. Series: Coniectanae Biblica, Old Testament, 52 — Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2005, 459 p., ISBN 91-22-02120-5 (pbk.).
- Momen, Wendi, with Moojan Momen, *Understanding the Baha'i Faith*. Series: Understanding Faith — Edinburgh, Dunedin Academic Press, 2006, ix+164 p., ISBN 1-903765-50-1 (pbk.).
- Monaca, Mariangela, *La Sibilla a Roma: I libri sibillini fra religione e politica*, prefazione di Giulia Sfameni Gasparro. Series: Hiera, Collana di studi storico-religiosi, 8 — Cosenza: Edizioni Lionello Giordano, 2005, 324 p., € 22.00, ISBN 88-86919-21-2 (pbk.).
- Poewe, Karla, *New Religions and the Nazis* — New York, London, Routledge, 2006, xii+218 p., ISBN 0-415-29025-2 (pbk.).
- Segal, Robert A., *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* — Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, 163 p., £ 6.99, ISBN 0-19-280347-6 (pbk.).
- Segal, Robert A. (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* — Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, xix+471 p., ISBN 0-631-23216-8 (hb.).
- Sfameni Gasparro, Giulia (ed.), *Modi di comunicazione tra il divino e l'umano: Tradizioni profetiche, divinazione, astrologia e magia nel*

- mondo mediterraneo antico. Atti del II Seminario Internazionale, Messina 21–22 Marzo 2003*, con la collaborazione di A. Cosentino, M. Monaca, E. Sanzi. Series: Hiera, Collana di studi storico-religiosi, 7, Temi e problemi della Storia delle Religioni nell'Europa contemporanea, 2 — Cosenza: Edizioni Lionello Giordano, 2005, 383 p., € 22.00, ISBN 88-86919-20-4 (pbk.).
- Sullivan, Karen, *Truth and the Heretic: Crises of Knowledge in Medieval French Literature* — Chicago, London, The University of Chicago Press, 2005, xii+281 p., ISBN 2-226-78169-0 (hb.).
- Togawa, Masahiko, *An Abode of the Goddess: Kingship, Caste and Sacrificial Organization in a Bengal Village* — New Delhi, Manohar, 2006, 225 p., ISBN 81-7304-677-8 (hb.).
- Vogel, Martin, *Apollon Onos* — Bonn, Orpheus, 2003, 299 p., ISBN 3-936626-02-2 (hb.).
- Warburg, Margit, Annika Hvithamar and Morten Warmind (eds.), *Baha'i and Globalisation*. — Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2005, 309 p., € 34.00, ISBN 87-7934-109-8 (pbk.).

## CONTENTS

### Articles

- Daniel VEIDLINGER, *When a Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures. Mahāyāna Influence on Theravāda Attitudes Towards Writing* .... 405
- Albert DOJA, *Spiritual Surrender: From Companionship to Hierarchy in the History of Bektashism* ..... 448

### Book Reviews

- Richard Bonney, *Jihād. From Qur'ān to Bin Laden*  
(Peter ANTES) ..... 511
- Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (Olav HAMMER) ..... 513
- Harvey Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity. A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission* (Sebastian SCHÜLER) ..... 516
- Celia E. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* (Florence PASCHE) ..... 520

VOL. LIII NO. 4 2006

ISSN 0029–5973 (paper version)  
ISSN 1568–5276 (online version)

VOL. LIII,  
NO. 4

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE

[www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)



## NUMEN

International Review for the History of Religions

### *Aims & Scope*

The official journal of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) — is one of the world's leading journals devoted to the academic study of religions. It covers the full breadth of current international scholarship in the field, featuring articles on contemporary religious phenomena as well as on historical themes, theoretical contributions besides more empirically oriented studies. In all areas of religious studies *NUMEN* publishes articles, book reviews, review articles, and survey articles.

### *Editors*

Einar Thomassen, IKRR/Religion, University of Bergen, Øisteinsgate 3, NO-5007 Bergen, Norway; E-mail: Einar.Thomassen@krr.uib.no

Gustavo Benavides, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085, USA;

E-mail: gustavo.benavides@villanova.edu

### *Book Review Editor*

Maya Burger, Département interfacultaire histoire et de sciences des religions, Anthropole, Université de Lausanne, Faculté de Théologie, BFSH2, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland; E-mail: maya.burger@unil.ch

### *Editorial Board*

R.I.J. Hackett (Knoxville, TN, USA); G. ter Haar (The Hague, The Netherlands); A. Tsukimoto (Tokyo, Japan); T. Jensen (Odense, Denmark); I.S. Gilhus (Bergen, Norway); G.L. Lease (Santa Cruz, CA, USA); P. Kumar (Durban, South Africa); A.H. Khan (Toronto, Canada); B. Boeking (London, UK); F. Diez de Velasco (Tenerife, Spain); M. Joy (Calgary, Canada); A.T. Wasim (Yogyakarta, Indonesia).

### *Honorary life members of the IAHR*

P. Antes (Hannover); M. Araki (Tsukuba); J.O. Awolalu (Ibadan); L. Bäckman (Stockholm); C. Colpe (Berlin); Kong Fan (Beijing); G.S. Gasparro (Messina); Y. González Torres (Mexico City); Å. Hultkrantz (Stockholm); G.C. Oosthuizen (Durban); M. Pye (Marburg); J.R. Ries (Louvain-la-Neuve); K. Rudolph (Marburg); N. Tamaru (Tokyo); J. Waardenburg (Lausanne); R.J.Z. Werblowsky (Jerusalem).

### *Notes for Contributors*

Please refer to the fourth page of the Volume prelims.

*NUMEN* (print ISSN 0029-5973, online ISSN 1568-5276) is published 4 times a year by Brill, Plantijnstraat 2, 2321 JC Leiden, The Netherlands, tel. +31 (0)71 5353500, fax +31 (0)71 5317532.

### *Abstracting & Indexing*

*NUMEN* is indexed in *Anthropological Index Online*, *Current Contents*, *MLA International Bibliography of Books and Articles on Modern Languages and Literatures*, *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, *Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works*, *Religions & Theological Abstracts*, *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, and the IAHR bibliographical journal *Science of Religion, Abstracts and Index of Recent Articles*.

### *Subscription rates*

For institutional customers, the subscription price for the print edition plus online access of Volume 54 (2007, 4 issues) is EUR 222 / USD 282. Institutional customers can also subscribe to the online-only version at EUR 200 / USD 254. Individual customers can only subscribe to the print edition at EUR 74 / USD 94.

All prices are exclusive of VAT (not applicable outside the EU) but inclusive of shipping & handling. Subscriptions to this journal are accepted for complete volumes only and take effect with the first issue of the volume.

### *Claims*

Claims for missing issues will be met, free of charge, if made within three months of dispatch for European customers and five months for customers outside Europe.

### *Online access*

For details on how to gain online access, please refer to the last page of this issue, or check [www.brill.nl/nu](http://www.brill.nl/nu).

### *Subscription orders, payments, claims and customer service*

Brill, c/o Turpin Distribution, Stratton Business Park, Pegasus Drive, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8TQ, UK, tel. +44 (0)1767 604954, fax +44 (0)1767 601640, e-mail [brill@turpin-distribution.com](mailto:brill@turpin-distribution.com).

### *Back volumes*

Back volumes of the last two years are available from Brill. Please contact our customer service as indicated above.

For back volumes or issues older than 2 years, please contact Periodicals Service Company (PSC), 11 Main Street, Germantown, NY 12526, USA. E-mail [psc@periodicals.com](mailto:psc@periodicals.com) or visit PSC's web site [www.periodicals.com](http://www.periodicals.com).

### © 2006 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints BRILL, Hotei Publishing, IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publishers.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by the publisher provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

Printed in the Netherlands (on acid-free paper).

Visit our web site at [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

# WHEN A WORD IS WORTH A THOUSAND PICTURES: MAHĀYĀNA INFLUENCE ON THERAVĀDA ATTITUDES TOWARDS WRITING

DANIEL VEIDLINGER

## *Summary*

This article argues that Buddhist attitudes towards the written word in major Theravāda regions of Southeast Asia were strongly influenced by Mahāyāna Buddhism. Writing is not mentioned in the Pāli canon of the Theravāda Buddhists, and no emphasis was put on the idea of worshipping books in authoritative Theravāda literature, save a few words in an eleventh-century sub-commentarial text. The early generations of Theravāda Buddhists, not surprisingly, had an ambivalent relationship to writing and there is little evidence to suggest that they revered it. On the other hand, from the earliest times, seminal Mahāyāna texts have reserved their highest praise for the Dharma-bearing written word, and archeological and iconographic evidence as well as accounts of Chinese travelers suggest that *stūpas* were indeed made to enshrine texts and that books were the subject of votive cults. From the end of the first millennium CE, however, some Theravāda communities in Southeast Asia did begin to revere the written word in a Buddhist context by constructing beautiful libraries to house the texts, making texts out of gold, enshrining them in *stūpas*, and even worshipping them outright. In places such as Burma, Sri Lanka and central Thailand, this change of attitude coincided with the height of Mahāyāna influence. Moreover, in the northern Thai kingdom of Lan Na, there does not appear ever to have been any significant Mahāyāna presence and consequently, the more reverential Mahāyāna attitudes towards writing do not seem to have been imbibed by the culture, even though writing was well-known and fairly widely utilized.

## *Introduction*

The four largest countries that are now home to the majority of Theravāda Buddhists — Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia — were all at various times prior to the thirteenth century host to significant Mahāyāna Buddhist ideas and communities.

However, there has been a dearth of scholarship on the career of Mahāyāna itself in the region as well as on the ways in which this little-studied feature of Southeast Asian history might have influenced the Theravāda forms of Buddhism practiced there. This article is a first attempt to explore the effect that Mahāyāna had on one particular aspect of Southeast Asian religious life — regional attitudes towards the written word in a Buddhist context.

The Pāli oral tradition has long been greatly valued in the Theravādin world, where monks are still trained to memorize copious amounts of Pāli texts by heart. Every *Sutta* commences with the phrase *Evaṃ me sutam*, “Thus have I heard,” an indication that the canonical texts were supposedly remembered by those lucky enough to have heard the Buddha preach, and were then passed on by word of mouth through the ages. The Pāli tradition holds that these texts were passed down orally by groups of memorizer-reciters known as *bhāṇakas* and were only written down around 70 B.C.E. in Sri Lanka during the fourth Buddhist council (*Mahāvamsa* 33.100–101), after which they were still transmitted primarily orally for many centuries. Great prestige has always accrued to monks who have memorized large amounts of canonical material, and they were honored with such titles as *Tipiṭakadhara* or “bearer of the canon.” The early generations of Theravāda Buddhists, not surprisingly, had an ambivalent relationship to writing and there is little evidence to suggest that they revered it, believed it held sacred powers, or indeed thought very much about it at all.

The situation in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which first arose around the very time that the *Tipiṭaka* was being committed to writing, is, however, strikingly different. Mahāyāna texts reserve their highest praise for the Dharma-bearing written word, and historical Mahāyāna practice seems often to have reflected this. Interestingly, from the end of the first millennium C.E., some Theravāda communities in Southeast Asia did begin to revere the written word in a Buddhist context by constructing beautiful libraries to house the texts, making texts out of gold, enshrining them in *stūpas*, and even worshipping them outright. This article explores the possibility that

these attitudes and practices were in fact strongly influenced by Mahāyāna Buddhism.

An understanding of the ways that different communications media were used is of more than passing historical interest. In the quest to achieve the fullest possible comprehension of the life of Buddhism, the various ways in which adherents encountered the texts of this religion — memory, manuscripts, radio, the Internet — should be examined as well. The medium may not *be* the message, but it most certainly plays a crucial role in shaping the way that message is delivered and digested. Whether cultural life is lived through the ear or through the eye has far-reaching implications for the way society and its institutions evolve and the way texts are created, treated, and interpreted, as has been discussed by scholars such as Marshall McLuhan (1964), Jack Goody (1977) and Walter Ong (1982). There is considerable debate about the specific ways in which orality, writing and other media affect the discourse around texts that they carry — for example some say orality is associated with greater conservatism because the importance of transmitting a text verbatim with this limited method overshadows critique, but others believe the ossified nature of written texts may lead the reader to feel that its message is also unchanging, giving birth to the modern phenomenon of literalist fundamentalism. While debates about the role of writing in fundamentalism as well as a host of other features of modern thought such as the development of historical consciousness and scientific rationality are ongoing, at least there is agreement that the media are not just empty vessels but do indeed shape their message in *some* way. Having said this, I do wish to emphasize that the current article is not a detailed examination of the different ways that Buddhist texts were transmitted through the ages, nor does it focus on the specific ways in which the media used for this transmission might have affected the life of the texts.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it deals primarily with the role that

---

<sup>1</sup> A more general analysis of the different methods of communicating Buddhist texts is covered in Veidlinger 2006.

the *idea* of writing and books played in the cultures under study, which may or may not coincide with the degree to which writing was actually used to transmit and preserve Buddhist texts. The phrase “attitudes towards writing” in the title is therefore more closely associated with veneration of writing (“the cult of the book”) than with the discursive uses of writing. One should not conclude too much about the nature of textual transmission from the information presented herein because neither the existence nor the veneration of written *Suttas* necessarily indicate widespread literacy in and of themselves.

I would also like to clarify another important phrase in the title of this article. In speaking of “Mahāyāna influence” upon Theravāda Buddhism, I am referring to the influence of those advocating the ideas and practices found or described in Sanskrit texts that are generally considered Mahāyāna on communities shaped by ideas and practices found or described in Pāli literature. While it is difficult to identify any particular person or group of people as “Mahāyānist” in the pre-modern Southeast Asian world under study here, there were certainly doctrines, rituals and divinities found in Mahāyāna texts that were substantially different from those found in authoritative Theravāda texts. A Mahāyāna Buddhist, in this context, would be someone who knew about and agreed with, practiced, or promulgated some of the concepts in these texts. They need not have identified themselves solely as Mahāyānists, and indeed it has historically been possible for both laypeople and monks in one school to believe some of the ideas central to the other school.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the porous nature of the doctrinal affiliation of monks and the possibility of belonging with respect to practice to one group and with respect to belief to another, see Walser 2005, Chapter 1, and Seyfort-Ruegg 2004:7–12, 28–31.

*The Written Word in Mahāyāna Buddhism*

Written Buddhist texts — “scriptures” in the literal meaning of the term — have occupied from early on an elevated position in a large segment of Mahāyāna discourse and practice, especially when compared to the modest role accorded sacred books and manuscripts in the wider Indian and Brahmanical milieu in which it arose. Amongst the earliest Mahāyāna literature is the influential *Prajñāpāramitā* genre that dates back about two millennia and highlights the importance of wisdom and insight into emptiness. In these texts the faithful are commonly enjoined to copy and worship the text itself in passages such as the following:

... if someone else were to learn this perfection of wisdom, recite and study it, and wisely attend to it, would reveal it to others, and would honour, revere, and worship, with flowers, etc. . . . a written copy of it; then [he] would on that account beget . . . merit. (Conze 1975:248)

The association of wisdom, *prajñā*, with books and manuscripts is exemplified in early iconographic depictions of the apotheosis of wisdom, the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*, who is almost always portrayed with a manuscript. Kinnard in his study of Buddhist Pāla era iconography highlights the fact that the book

is perhaps the single, incontrovertible iconographic feature of *Prajñāpāramitā* images; although the presence of the book does not necessarily signify *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Prajñāpāramitā* virtually always has the book. . . . The identification of the book as the *Prajñāpāramitā*, however, of course ties in with the discourse in the *Prajñāpāramitā* itself, with the constant invocation to set the book up as an object of veneration. (Kinnard 1999:138)

Furthermore,

In virtually all of the various Pāla-period *Prajñāpāramitā* and Cundā images, as well as in all of the later textual descriptions of such images, one iconographic detail remains constant: the book. The book is sometimes held aloft, sometimes held close to the chest; it is frequently placed atop one or more lotuses. It is always prominent. . . . (*ibid.* 146).

Just as the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* rhetorically emphasized the physical book and the *prajñā* it conveyed, extolling the virtues of the text and encouraging

the practitioner to set it up and to venerate it, later Indian Mahāyāna *visually* emphasizes the book; the book thus becomes a standard iconographic motif not just associated with *Prajñāpāramitā*, but with Mañjuśrī, Tārā and a whole range of female deities, all of whom . . . are intimately associated with *prajñā*. The book becomes *the* signifier of *prajñā*, to the point that it is quite literally placed on a pedestal. (*ibid.* 147)

Beyond the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, many other Mahāyāna texts also speak of the importance of worshipping books containing the purported teachings of the Buddha. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, for example, has well-known sections that glorify the physical text and invite the faithful to worship it.<sup>3</sup> A pre-eighth-century manuscript found at Gilgit of the *Buddhabalānaprātihāryavikurvāṇanirdeśa-sūtra* also includes unequivocal exhortations to copy, read and worship the manuscript with the traditional votive offerings of lamplight, flowers and incense (Schopen 1978:325). Like Kinnard, Schopen holds that many of these texts elevate the worship of books and manuscripts as a superior form of cultic practice, above even the veneration of *stūpas* and Buddha images (Schopen 1978:336, n. 4). With regards to a section about the short textual pericopes known as *Dhāraṇīs*, Schopen has pointed out that, “It is implicitly stated that depositing the *dhāraṇī* from our text in a *stūpa* generates more merit than is generated by depositing any of the four kinds of relics” (1985:126).

A passage from an inscribed *Bodhigarbhālankāralakṣadhāraṇī* examined by Schopen is as follows:

Whatsoever monk or nun or lay man or woman, or whatsoever other devout son or daughter of good family, after having written this *Dhāraṇī*, after having deposited it inside, will make a *caitya*, by that single *caitya* being made a hundred thousand *caityas* of the Tathāgatha are (in effect) made. And those *caityas* come to be worshipped with articles (of worship), with all perfumes and flowers and incense, aromatic powders, cloths, umbrellas, flags and banners. But it is not merely the *caitya* (that is worshipped) thus; the Jewel of the Buddha, the Jewel of the Dharma, and the Jewel of the Community are (in effect) also worshipped with articles of such a kind. (Schopen 1985:137)

<sup>3</sup> See *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* Chapter 10 for some examples of the reverence directed towards writing and books.

In all of these cases, the book is not just important as a container or vehicle for the *Dharma* but rather the artifact itself is worshipped apart from the communication of its contents.

There is also physical evidence of the worship of books in Mahāyāna circles, such as deposits of sandalwood paste, vermilion and saffron on the painted wooden manuscript covers of manuscripts like the seventh-century *Samghātasūtra* from Gilgit (described in Klimburg-Salter 1987). The *Samghātasūtra* manuscripts themselves were found in what was probably a *stūpa* and their very presence there indicates that they were treated as sacred objects similar to relics of the Buddha. In addition, many examples of *Dhāraṇīs*, including the so-called Buddhist Creed that summarizes the process of *pratītya-samutpāda*,<sup>4</sup> have been found in north-eastern India on clay tablets that were interred within *stūpas* and clearly intended to be venerated.<sup>5</sup> Even damaged Buddhist texts appear to have been ritually buried within *stūpas* in the Gandhāran region, suggesting their equation with relics (Walser 2005:125). Furthermore, travel accounts agree with the picture that emerges from the literary and archaeological record; in the seventh century Chinese pilgrims Xuanzang and Yijing both noticed that in India, short passages from Buddhist texts were often placed in small *stūpas* (Kinnard 1999:152).

Turning now to the more problematic subject of the position of written *Dhamma* texts in the Pāli literature and Southeast Asian practice associated with Theravāda Buddhism, we find that the different kinds of sources do not speak with one voice on this topic.

---

<sup>4</sup> *ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hy avadat teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ*: Those things that arise due to a cause, the Buddha has explained their cause, as well as their cessation, thus has the great renunciant spoken.

<sup>5</sup> For a survey of these findings, see Kinnard 1999:150–58. There, he presents evidence from the old Buddhist university site of Nālandā for the presence of many inscribed clay seals that have been placed inside *stūpas*. This extends to sites throughout Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.



It appears that different Southeast Asian cultures have historically had divergent attitudes towards the written word which were reflected in their treatment of books and inscriptions. The remainder of this article will examine the position of the written word according to Theravāda literary sources as well as “on the ground” in historical Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and to some extent Cambodia. It will be seen that, unlike Mahāyāna texts, the early canonical Pāli texts do not revere writing. Nevertheless Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia and parts of Thailand did incorporate into their cultural ethos varying degrees of veneration towards the written word over time. The evidence strongly suggests that this development was in many respects a response to Mahāyāna influence, which has often been undervalued in the study of Theravāda Buddhist history.

### *The Theravāda Literary Record*

Writing is not mentioned in the Pāli canon and it is unlikely that the early Buddhists in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. were familiar with it.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of how similar the Pāli canon as we have it today is to the texts collected by those early followers of the Buddha, the later compilers and redactors did not choose to add any references to writing, even though living several centuries later in Sri Lanka they would have had intimate knowledge of it. This has meant that, unlike the clearly articulated admonitions to honor the written word in authoritative Mahāyāna texts, Theravāda canonical texts from the *Tipiṭaka* have nothing to say about the subject. On the other hand, the frequent use in the canon of Pāli terms such

---

<sup>6</sup> This point is addressed by von Hinüber 1989 and Falk 1993. They both conclude, based on numerous factors, that writing was unknown in Magadha at the time of the Buddha. There is no hard evidence of writing in India prior to Aśoka, and there is precious little evidence of it from within the corpus of canonical Pāli literature. The few times that forms of the verb *likh* appear can all be explained as referring to scratching and not writing (Falk 1993:275–83).

as *bahussuto* meaning one who has “heard much” to refer to knowledgeable individuals demonstrates the importance of oral communication and memorization in the worldview of the canonical texts. The written word and certainly manuscripts as objects worthy of veneration lay beyond the purview of these seminal Theravādin texts.<sup>7</sup>

When it comes to the place of manuscripts in the devotional life of the faithful, there is the further complication that there is very little indeed about the worship of any material object in the *Tipiṭaka*. This subject is discussed in the Pāli canon mostly with respect to the relics (*dhātu/sarīra*) of the Buddha and their protective *stūpas*,<sup>8</sup> and this has served as the paradigm for cultic practice directed towards *bodhi* trees, Buddha images and other objects of devotion.<sup>9</sup> No attempt to formally include written texts in the cultic scheme of Theravāda Buddhism was made even in the great commentaries of the fifth century C.E. It is not until the twelfth century sub-commentarial period that accompanied the unification of the *Saṅgha* in Sri Lanka that we first find evidence of an attempt to provide a normative account of the cultic status of the written Pāli word. In the *Vinayaṭīkā* (*Sāraṭṭhadīpanī-ṭīkā* VRI-Myanmar Vol. 1, 172) it is said that there are three types of *cetiya*: *Pari-bhogacetiya*, *dhātucetiya* and *dhammacetiya*. The first type houses articles used by the Buddha, the second, his relics, and the third, books inscribed with the dependent-origination formulation and other texts (*paṭiccasamuppādādi-likhita-potthakam*). This passage is also quoted verbatim in an anthology from about a century later called the *Sārasaṅgaha* (*Sārasaṅgaha* 40).

---

<sup>7</sup> For more discussion of this topic, see Collins 1992.

<sup>8</sup> The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* is one of the main sources of inspiration for Buddhist cultic practice. After the Buddha dies, his disciples honor the body with flowers, perfume and music and Ānanda says that his remains are to be treated as those of a wheel-turning monarch (*cakkavatti*), which is to say interred in *stūpas* and venerated (see DN ii, 161).

<sup>9</sup> For further discussion of this topic, see Trainor 1997 and Strong 2004.

The reader will have noticed that the Theravāda texts mentioned above are not contemporary with the foundational, bibliophilic Mahāyāna literature such as the *Lotus* and *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. The core Pali *Suttas* had taken shape before these were composed and the commentarial period ensued several hundred years after the birth of the Mahāyāna. Could it be, then, that the reverential and even fetishistic approach to written texts recorded in Mahāyāna literature was common to the Theravāda and other Hīnayāna traditions at this time as well, but is not in evidence simply because no major works into which the subject of book worship might have been incorporated were composed at this time? It is certainly true that the key period about which we are talking — roughly 200 B.C.E. through 200 C.E. — apparently did not see the composition of many Pāli texts that have survived, but there is at least one well-known work that happens to have a fair bit to say about writing in Hīnayāna circles around the time that Mahāyāna attitudes towards this medium were being formulated. I refer here to the *Milindapañha*, which is a post-canonical text that purports to record a series of dialogues between the second-century B.C.E. Greco-Bactrian king Menander (Milinda in Pāli) and a Hīnayāna monk named Nāgasena. The exact provenance of this text is unclear; it obviously must post-date Menander but also pre-date Buddhaghosa by several generations as it was mentioned in some of his older source texts (von Hinüber 1996b:152). In fact, it is fair to say that the time-window during which the *Milindapañha* was composed is substantially the same as that of the seminal Mahāyāna texts. It is therefore a crucial player in the search for evidence about early Buddhist attitudes towards writing.

Writing and books are mentioned a handful of times in the *Milindapañha* and each instance strongly suggests that the reverential attitudes towards writing in contemporary Mahāyāna texts were not mirrored by all Buddhists during this period. At one point, Milinda asks Nāgasena how people can know about the greatness of the Buddha when he is no longer in the world. The monk replies:

“Long, long ago, O king, there was a master of writing (*lekhācariyo*), by name Tissa the Elder, and many are the years gone by since he has died. How can people know of him?”

“By his writing, sir.”

“Just so, great king, whosoever sees what the Truth is, he sees what the Blessed One was, for the Truth was preached by the Blessed One.” (Rhys Davids 1890:110)

If writing was regarded as the main, or even an important, way of transmitting the Buddha’s teachings, then surely Nāgasena would have said that the Buddha’s words can still be read and thus one knows about the greatness of the Buddha. He would not have *separated* the act of writing from the dissemination of the Buddha’s words of Truth. For an even clearer example of the respective roles of writing and orality in Nāgasena’s world, we can look to a discussion of memory and the process of recollection. The monk provides several examples of how past knowledge can arise, including the following:

[knowledge can arise through] learning by heart, as the repeaters of the scriptures (*dhāraṇakā*) by their skill in learning by heart recollect so much . . . [or knowledge can arise through] reference to a book (*poṭṭhaka-nibandhanato*), as when kings calling to mind a previous regulation, say: “bring the book here,” and remind themselves out of that. (Rhys Davids 1890:123).

Here there is a clear division of labor between orality and writing, with the former being associated with the religious realm and the latter with the political realm. This is a far cry from the identification of written books with the *Dharma* itself that is seen in some Mahāyāna texts. A further reference to writing later in the *Milindapañña* shows that this medium was considered inferior to verbal communication. In this case, Nāgasena says that he will explain the advantages of walking the Buddhist path through canonical passages which he will supplement with his own knowledge and experience. He then adds,

“It will be, O king, as when an able writing-master, on exhibiting, by request, his skill in writing, will supplement the written signs by an explanation of reasons out of his experience and knowledge, and thus that writing of his becomes finished, perfect, without defect.” (Rhys Davids 1894:247)

This is a long way from the praise heaped upon sacred books in the early Mahāyāna tradition which views them as perfect embodiments of the *Dharma*, asking not to be completed as in this case, but rather to be worshipped. Finally, it should be pointed out that while the *Milindaphaṇḥa* deals with the philosophical problems attendant to the roles of relic worship and *paritta* recitation within the economy of karma, it makes no mention of the similar problems that might arise from worshipping a book rather than studying its contents. This suggests that such a practice was little-known at the time.

The rest of the literary evidence for writing, its uses and the attitudes towards it amongst Theravāda Buddhists is to be found mostly in the various chronicles produced throughout the Theravādin world of Southeast Asia. These chronicles, such as the *Mahāvamsa* (MV) from Sri Lanka, the *Jinakālamālī* (JKM) from the northern Thai kingdom of Lan Na, the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* from central Thailand and the *Sāsanavamsa* (SV) from Burma, generally start with the life of the Buddha and discuss the evolution of the religion, including the career of the *Saṅgha*, the development of Pāli literature, the legends of important Buddha images and relics, and end by focussing on their particular region of provenance. These historiographical texts, then, offer us a picture of writing and its uses but at the same time highlight parochial aspects of this subject in the region in which they were made. Coupled with epigraphical, iconographical and archaeological evidence, a picture of the place of writing in the religious culture of the main regions of Theravāda influence emerges.

#### *The Position of Writing in the Theravāda Milieu of Sri Lanka*

The *Mahāvamsa* (Geiger 1908) from Sri Lanka is the most important chronicle in the Theravādin world. It is the main source for the history of Theravāda Buddhism up to the time of Buddhaghosa and has been used not only by many other traditional chronicles, but also by modern scholars. It consists of two main

parts, the first of which was written by the monk Mahānāma in the fifth century, and the second of which, often called the *Cūlavamsa*,<sup>10</sup> was continued into the nineteenth century by various hands. The first three quarters of the *Cūlavamsa*, up to chapter 79, were probably written by a monk in the thirteenth century;<sup>11</sup> this was followed by a section composed in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and a final section continued up to the reign of Kittisirirājasīha in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the Pāli canonical material and the vast majority of commentarial literature, accounts of writing in a religious context are quite common in the MV. The most striking episode of book worship in the MV is the veneration of a golden copy of the *Abhidhamma* sponsored by the tenth-century king Kassapa V:

... *Laṅkindo abhidhammaṃ abhāsai.*  
*soṇṇapaṭṭe likhāpetvā Abhidhammapiṭakaṃ tadā*  
*Dhammasaṃgaṇikaṃ poṭṭhaṃ nānāratanabhūṣitaṃ*  
*katvā nagaramajjhamhi kāretvā gehaṃ uttamaṃ*  
*taṃ tattha ṭhapayitvāna parihāraṃ adāpayi.*  
*Sakkasenāpatiṭṭhānaṃ datvā puttassa attano*  
*parihāre niyojesi tattha taṃ dhammapoṭṭhake*

The king of Laṅkā had the *Abhidhamma* recited. Having had the *Abhidhamma* written on gold tablets and then having adorned the *Dhammasaṃgaṇī* book with various jewels, bringing it to the middle of the city and having it

<sup>10</sup> Ed. Geiger 1925, 1927, 1930. The chapters of this part are numbered herein according to Geiger's scheme wherein they start at chapter 37 where the first part of the *Mahāvamsa* leaves off. The abbreviation MV thus stands for the text as a whole and includes what the PTS edition has titled the *Mahāvamsa* and *Cūlavamsa*.

<sup>11</sup> This is endorsed by the presence in four of the manuscripts used by Geiger of the opening salutation *Namo tassa bhagavato* near the end of chapter 79.

<sup>12</sup> Geiger points out that one of his manuscripts actually ended at 90.102 with the early fourteenth century king Parakkamabāhu IV, and that within the MV itself, at 99.76, there is the suggestion that the current king had the history from Parakkamabāhu IV continued up to his era. These facts further strengthen the idea of a second section that was written sometime not too long after 1300 C.E.

positioned in the upper chamber, he provided it with a retinue. Giving the position of *Sakkasenā* to his own son, he commissioned him to care for the books of the *Dhamma*. (MV 52.49–56)

The MV goes on to narrate that the books were housed in a splendid temple and were brought out annually for a great festival. Each year, the king arranged for the books to be carried on the back of an elephant with much pomp through the town and placed in a pavilion on a cushion for relics, where they were worshipped (*maṇḍape hātupīṭhasmiṃ patiṭṭhāpiya pūjayi*). Significantly, this event is also mentioned in a contemporary inscription from Anurādhapura made at the behest of Kassapa.<sup>13</sup> There is little doubt that the golden tablets were here venerated as ritual objects. The veneration of the text itself points to the deference paid to writing and is a clear indication that influential Sri Lankans at this time held writing in high esteem.

This golden *Abhidhamma* of Kassapa is not the only such artifact in the MV. There is another instance in the eighteenth century where mention is made of a golden book, demonstrating the continued reverence for writing in Sri Lanka.

*Chasatanavasahassāni mūlāni ca saddhayā  
vissajjētvāna kāresi suvaṇṇapothhakaṃ varam;  
tesu suvaṇṇapaṇṇesu dhammacakkādiḥ bahū  
likhāpetvāna suttante saddhammakathikehi so  
sabbarattim kathāpetvānekavatthūhi pūjayi  
anekesu ca vāresu assosi dhammam uttamaṃ.  
Lekhake saṃnipādetvā ekāhe va narādhipo  
Dīghāgamaṃ likhāpetvā katvāna saṃgamaṃ bahuṃ  
tato dhammaṃ sabbarattim kathāpetvāna sādhuḥkaṃ  
mahāpūjaṃ pavattetvā sayam sutvā ca sāvayi.  
Saṃyuttāgamādini aññāni potthake bahū  
likhāpetvāna saddhāya lekhakānaṃ dhanāni' dā.  
Aññe pabbajitā sādhu gahaṭṭhā dhammapothhake likhāpetvāna*

At a cost of nine thousand, six hundred kaḥāpanas he in his piety had a magnificent golden book made. On its golden leaves he had many Suttantas inscribed

<sup>13</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, 52.

such as the Dhammacakka Sutta and others and had these recited by preachers of the true doctrine the whole night long. Honouring them with many articles, he listened repeatedly to the incomparable doctrine. The Lord of men called scribes together, made them copy out in one day the Dīgha-Nikāya, showed them much favour and then had the sacred text preached [from that] the whole night long in the right manner. He celebrated a great sacrificial festival, listened to (the texts) and [then] recited himself. In his piety he had the Saṃyutta-Nikāya and many other books copied and gave the scribes money. People who had renounced the world and inhabitants of houses had other sacred books carefully copied. . . . (MV 99.28–25; Geiger's translation)

The MV maintains an unusually lengthy record of manuscript-making efforts over the centuries that further attests to the importance of this kind of activity in Sri Lanka. For example, about a century after the reign of Kassapa V, following a low ebb of Buddhism on the island, King Vijayabāhu I builds the Temple of the Tooth, establishes monasteries and performs other meritorious deeds, after which he has the *Tipiṭaka* copied and donates it to the *Saṅgha* (*piṭakattayaṃ likhāpetvā bhikkhusaṃghass' adāpayi*, 60.23).

In the sixteenth century, the MV tells once again of the veneration of manuscripts. King Virakkama

. . . *Saddhammaṃ assosī jinadesitaṃ.*  
*Uḷārapūjaṃ katvāna pañcapaññāsamattakaṃ*  
*sabbarattivacaṃ dhammaṃ cāpi saddhāya so suṇi. Tiṃsasahassapaṇṇesu*  
*likhāpetvāna potthake saṭṭhisahassamattehi tepiṭakaṃ ca pūjayi.*

heard the true Dhamma that was taught by the Buddha. After making a great offering, he listened faithfully to fifty-five measures of Dhamma whose iteration lasted the whole night. He had books written on thirty thousand leaves and worshipped the *Tipiṭaka* with sixty thousand (gold pieces). (MV 92.11–13)

Here, although the main way that the Buddhist texts are communicated is orally, the writing of the texts is an important component of the veneration of the Buddha's teachings. Most importantly for the present inquiry, the texts were actively worshipped (*pūjayi*) in this case, no doubt with light, incense and flowers in a manner similar to that outlined in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.



Common laypeople, too, believed in the importance of writing down the *Dhamma* as well as the merit that could accrue from doing so. When Buddhism was waning on the island in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because of pressure from the Portuguese, from the Hindu king Rājasiha, and from the general state of unrest on the island, resourceful laymen undertook to revive the production and reproduction of a number of texts.

Besides extending their patronage to those who produced original works, the Sinhalese chiefs also patronised the scribes who copied the Buddhist sacred texts. The author of *Vidhurajātakakavi* mentions that his patron caused books on the Dhamma to be written. Robert Knox mentions that there were scribes who used to write many 'Books of Bonna' and sometimes carry them to great men as presents and expect a reward. Kurakkagedera Acāri Bavalat in her poem on the Hastipālajātakaya was perhaps echoing the wish the people at the time generally entertained when she said that it was her wish to acquire merit by causing religious books to be written. (Mirando 1985:79)

Great respect for books is usually accompanied by the construction of libraries, and so it was in Sri Lanka. The MV enumerates the construction of over 130 libraries, more than any other chronicle of which I am aware.<sup>14</sup> It is clear, then, that in Sri Lanka, especially from the tenth-century on, the production of religious books was increasingly viewed as important not only by monks and rulers, but by regular laypeople as well, who believed that their production was a meritorious enterprise that would lead to good karma and the strengthening of the religion.

### *The Position of Writing in the Theravāda Milieu of Burma*

Even a cursory perusal of Paññasāmi's 1861 Pāli chronicle of Burmese provenance known as the *Sāsanavaṃsa*<sup>15</sup> (SV) reveals a

<sup>14</sup> Two libraries are built during the twelfth century at MV 78.37, and shortly thereafter at 79.80 the MV says that 128 houses for books were built (*poṭṭhaka-mandire aṭṭhaviśasatāgantusālāyo*).

<sup>15</sup> Ed. Bode 1897. Although in its final form the SV is a rather late work, Lieberman (1976) has demonstrated that almost eighty percent of the substance of

high level of respect for written texts and literate culture which is further endorsed by the visually pleasing nature of many Burmese manuscripts, especially the *Kammavācā*,<sup>16</sup> by the presence of canonical passages on metal plates inside Buddha images,<sup>17</sup> and by the sheer volume and richness of Pāli inscriptions in that country.<sup>18</sup> It is in fact from the ancient Pyu site of Śrī Kṣetra in lower Burma about two hundred kilometers down the Irrawaddy river from Pagan that the oldest extant Pāli texts hail, written on twenty thin

---

the SV was taken from an 1831 vernacular text called *Tha-thana-wun-thá sa-dàn tha-thana-lin-ga-yá kyañ* (*History of the religion which is an adornment of the religion*), which, in turn, was based on the traditional royal chronicle *Mahārājavaṃsa*, and some older Burmese works, such as the *Buddhaghosuppatti*, along with inscriptions (*silālekhaṇa*) such as the famous Kalyāṇī Inscriptions. This variety demonstrates a fairly sophisticated negotiation of historical sources on the part of the author. Because of the age of the sources, we can surmise that many of the attitudes displayed towards writing in the SV are reflections of those of at least a generation earlier than the date of the composition of the text would suggest. Importantly, this also puts the majority of the text before the Second Anglo-Burmese War that led to the tightening of British hegemony in Burma and the infusion of European dispositions into Burmese society. Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that the sources of the SV are themselves based on earlier texts or oral traditions that have been lost to us, but whose content moves through various generations of texts with little alteration, like the genes of an endogamous community. This textual fidelity is suggested by the high degree of agreement between the early portions of the SV and those texts such as the MV and JKM that share with it some common sources. Thus the SV represents more of a traditional Burmese Buddhist outlook on the world than is at first suggested by the date of its composition. One cannot, then, simply attribute its conception of the written word to European or modern influence, but rather must focus on traditional Burmese society itself as the source of much of this perspective.

<sup>16</sup> Noel Singer (1993) presents photographs and discusses numerous Burmese manuscripts from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries.

<sup>17</sup> A 1658 C.E. example of a Buddha image housing passages from the *Tiṭṭaka* sits in the Ngahtatgyi Pagoda at Sagaing (Singer 1991:133).

<sup>18</sup> See Duroiselle 1921 for a list of inscriptions from Burma. The Kalyāṇī Pāli Inscription alone is written on three large stones and amounts to more than 30 modern printed pages.

gold plates in an Andhran script from perhaps the sixth or seventh century. The plates, incised with such passages as the enumeration of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, *ye dhammā hetuppabhavā*, the *iti pi so Bhagavā* praise and some less popular pericopes from *Abhidhamma* texts,<sup>19</sup> were bound together in the form of a palm-leaf manuscript and placed inside a reliquary which itself bears some Pāli lines that apparently had been mistakenly omitted from the plates (Stargardt 1995:207). It is generally conceded on the basis of this error as well as the fact that the covers sandwiching the plates were permanently sealed with wax that these items served a ritual rather than scholastic purpose. They are an indication that the Irrawaddy river basin was home in the first millennium to civilizations that cherished the written Pāli word — civilizations which were to influence heavily the nature of the Burmese kingdoms that conquered them.

Tradition holds that the important early king of Pagan, Aniruddha, wished to collect the *Tipiṭaka* texts and bring them to Pagan. He was not satisfied with merely bringing monks who were well versed in the Theravāda teachings to his capital, but wished first and foremost to bring the books. There are varying accounts of his quest, with the Thai sources saying that he got the texts from Sri Lanka (Jayawickrama 1968:142–143) and Burmese ones saying that he attacked the Mons at Thaton in 1057 C.E. and brought the texts from there (Sengupta 1994:40). Regardless of the origin of these canonical texts, all the sources agree that he brought a large amount of Pāli texts back to Pagan and deposited them in a prominent place. The Burmese Glass Palace Chronicle holds that the king “kept the 30 sets of Piṭaka in a *prāsād* richly fraught with gems, and caused the noble Order to give instruction therein” (cited at Luce 1969:285 n. 15). The magnificent tiered-roof library that still stands next to the palace-site may very well be the building in which these texts were placed (Luce 1969:285).

---

<sup>19</sup> For details, see Ray 1946:33–46, and Stargardt 1995:199–213.

In the early Pagan period, king Thiluin Man (Kyanzittha fl. 1084–1113 C.E.) built a palace that had a separate chamber for statues of the Buddha and copies of the *Tipiṭaka*, which he had recently redacted (Than Tun 1988:31; Luce 1969:69). A Mon inscription confirms that this king was very interested in producing copies of the scriptures, for it presents a prophecy given by the Buddha to Ānanda saying that 1636 years after his enlightenment, a great king will arise in Arimaddana (Pagan) who will purify, write down, and establish the scriptures.<sup>20</sup> This kind of anachronistic statement attributed to the Buddha, to whom writing was unknown, is rarely seen in Pāli literature but rather is found far more frequently in Mahāyāna texts. In fact, I know of no Pāli text from before this period that includes a statement by the Buddha about writing the scriptures.

There are many other references to the production of canonical texts in Pagan, some of which are mentioned in Luce's study of the site and its inscriptions:

In 1171 A.D. a district headman (*tuik sūkri*) at Sagaing dedicated land for the upkeep of the Piṭaka "made by my son Anudhe." In 1197 A.D. a whole set was dedicated at Sunyè, Kyauksè. In 1207 A.D., four years before his accession, a set was dedicated at Pagan by Nātoṇmyā. In 1223 A.D. Anantasūra included a full set in his dedication at Minnanthu. Elsewhere we read of "26 books" (*klyam*) of the Piṭaka being dedicated. Another Pagan dedication includes the making of "the *Silakhandhavā* at the beginning of the Piṭaka, one book (*klam*); the *Abhidhammasaṅginī*, one book; the Ten Jātakas (*tassa jat*), one book; the *Dhammapada*, one book; the *Wineñ* (Vinaya), one 'heap' (*pum*)." Another mentions the building of a 'golden cave' (*rhuy kū*), and giving of "three books at the beginning of the Piṭaka." (Luce 1969:254)

When scriptures were made, they were also well cared for. Indeed, Luce believes that the only pure stone building in Pagan was a library built by Kyanzittha (Luce 1969:57). Scriptures would generally be kept in gilded cases that were often heavily ornamented and very expensive in their own right (Luce 1969:253).

---

<sup>20</sup> *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. I, Pt. 2:141.

Having built a library, the donor's next concern was to provide it with attendants and necessary funds so that the repair of the building, preservation of the manuscripts, and new acquisitions to the library would be possible. These works are known as *tryāwat* — duties towards the Law, and to fulfil these purposes the donor dedicated to the Law lands, slaves, including scribes, and sometimes elephants, palmyra leaves and sesamum from which oil is extracted for lighting. The duties towards law also included the offering of daily food in the same way as to the Lord and to the Order. (Than Tun 1988:32)

The importance of writing in Burma is attested to in the SV in a unique reference to a text about the art of writing. In 1712 C.E., a learned monk named Ukkam̐samāla writes a text called *Vaṇṇabodhanaṃ* which is described as a *Likhananayaṃ* (SV 120).

*So pāli-aṭṭhakathā-ṭikā-gandhantaresu ativiya cheko Vaṇṇabodhanaṃ nāma Likhananayaṃ ca akāsi.*

He who was extremely knowledgeable regarding the canon, its commentaries and sub-commentaries, and other texts, made the writing manual called *Vaṇṇabodhanaṃ*. (SV 120)

*Likhana* means writing and *nayaṃ* means a way or method, so the text being discussed here is one which describes the methods of writing. Unfortunately, I have not been able to trace this work, but this kind of text is not mentioned in the Pāli literature of any other region, as far as I am aware, and its existence dovetails well with the idea that Burma was host to fairly elevated attitudes towards writing, especially when compared with some other Theravāda regions such as northern Thailand. It is generally when the written word has acquired more than just a utilitarian value that the art of writing becomes a concern to the religious. For example, the art of calligraphy was notoriously underdeveloped in Brahmanical India (Losty 1982:14–15) where writing did not have a hieratic function beyond conveying the words or assisting in the memorization of the text.

The most striking example of devotion to the written word in the Theravāda world is the monumental epigraphy of the Burmese king Mindon, who ascended the throne in 1852 C.E. In the 1870s

he had the entire *Tipiṭaka* copied onto 729 marble slabs that are housed in small pavilions on the grounds of the Kuthodaw Temple, but the late date of this project does not allow it to be admitted as evidence here as it is impossible to discount European and other outside influences in its production.

Another text, the *Gandhavaṃsa*, was probably composed one or two centuries earlier than the SV (Kumar 1992:5) and is essentially a list of various Pāli works accompanied by only the barest historical data. Although of unknown provenance, I would accord it Burmese authorship because all known manuscripts of the work are Burmese, its contents are very similar to those of the SV, and because of the likely identification of the author's stated birthplace of Haṃaraṭṭha with Haṃsāvati.

The *Gandhavaṃsa* ends with some inspiring lines on the merits of making and sponsoring written copies of texts. Similar to what is found in many Mahāyāna texts, here the making of manuscripts is seen as even greater than making Buddha images (Kumar 1992:33–34). Those responsible for the composition of this text render their respect for books in explicit terms, and encourage others to feel this way for books as well. Furthermore, this attitude actually accords with commonly held beliefs in Burma, for one often sees colophons that equate the words in the manuscript to Buddha images using the following formula:

*Akkharā ekamekaṇ ca Buddharūpaṃ samaṇ siyā tasmā hi paṇḍito poso likk-  
heyya piṭakattayaṃ.*

Each letter should be considered as a Buddha image, therefore the wise should write the *Tipiṭaka*.<sup>21</sup>

And they did.

---

<sup>21</sup> See for example the catalogue of Burmese manuscripts compiled by Bechert, Khin Su and Myint 1979, item numbers 9, 10, 39, 53, 60, 64, 68, 73, 91, 92, 93, 97, 100, 115, 131, 133, 134 and 136.

*The Position of Writing in the Theravāda Milieu of Central and Southern Thailand*

In central and southern Thailand, writing was accorded some degree of sanctity similar to, but less pronounced than, that found in Burma and Sri Lanka.

The earliest Buddhist residents of Central Thailand were the Mons, who ruled over a civilization called Dvāravatī in the central Thai plains that flourished from about the sixth to the ninth centuries. From what can be gathered from the few published Mon inscriptions from east of the Salween River, it can clearly be seen that the written word was valued by the Mons and that for them it probably held a considerable degree of sanctity and numinous power.

Some of the most important Mon Dvāravatī inscriptions are to be found on seventh-century stone wheels called *Dhammacakkas* (Brown 1996:96–120). Many of these wheels bear Pāli inscriptions on the spokes or felloe taken from seminal canonical texts such as the *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta*. Other inscriptions on stone *Dhammacakkas* appear to come from such texts as the *Dhammapada*, *Vinayamahāvagga*, and the *Visuddhimagga* (Skilling 1997:133–57). Importantly for the present study, many of these wheels were elevated on pillars, rendering the inscribed texts unreadable for those on the ground. This suggests that rather than serving to teach the faithful about the *Dhamma*, the words themselves were deemed to have had some numinous power, whose benefits could be received by being in the presence of the inscriptions or even worshipping the wheels on which they were written.

The decline of Mon power in the region was followed by Thai ascendancy. While the early Thai were more or less illiterate, by the thirteenth century, no doubt in part due to Mon influence, the Thai speaking peoples began to use writing. Mid-fourteenth-century inscriptions from the old capital of Sukhodaya exist which enjoin the faithful to show great respect for the golden Buddha image and the *Tipiṭaka* which were kept in the royal palace (*yok añjali*

*namaskār phra phuttha rūp thøng læ phra trai piṭok*).<sup>22</sup> Since we know that a highly developed cult of image worship was practiced at this time, the directive to treat the texts in the same manner as the Buddha image tells us that these were indeed regarded as highly sacred items, and may have played a significant role in the cultic life of the area.

Some of the Thai clearly felt that writing had more than just a utilitarian value, as illustrated by the fact that two gold plates, in the form of palm-leaves bearing Pāli canonical passages, were found in the main *cetiya* at Wat Phra Nøh in Ayudhyā (*Charuik Nai Prathet Thai*, Vol. 5, 204–212). Each leaf displays the twelve link formulation of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* chain of dependent co-origination in both its forward (*anuloma*) and reverse (*paṭiloma*) orders written in *Dhamma* script of the fifteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The text can be found in numerous places in the canonical literature and is one of the most important ones in Buddhist philosophy. There are also more than twenty examples of inscriptions with the popular Buddhist formula *ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha, tesañca yo nirodho ca evaṃ vādī mahāsamaṇo*.<sup>24</sup> These plaques are by and large found in the Mon and Khmer heartland, namely around Nakhøn Pathom and Lopburi, and no doubt many of them were interred at some point in *stūpas* as objects of veneration similar to relics.

The *Saddhammasaṅgaha*, a chronicle probably written in Siam by a Sinhalese-educated Thai monk around 1400 C.E., promotes writing by ascribing an utterance about its merits to the Buddha

---

<sup>22</sup> Inscription 4, face II line 46 (Griswold and Prasært 1992:496), and Inscription 5, face III line 40 (Griswold and Prasært 1992:513).

<sup>23</sup> This script is generally associated with the northern Thai kingdom of Lan Na. It is unusual to see this script so far south, but perhaps the leaves were written by a monk from the north who had taken up residence in the area and imbibed the Siamese attitudes towards writing.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed study of these inscriptions, see Suphaphan 1986:16–34.



himself, very similar to what is later found in the *Gandhavaṃsa* discussed already. At chapter ten, verse ten, the Buddha says:

Those who write down a letter of the three Piṭakas are reborn in all the worlds with beautiful bodies, radiant like the sun, just as if they had made an image of the Buddha.

This kind of thinking is instantiated for example in a central Thai inscription that records the worship of a text using the term *pūjā*. This 1536 C.E. inscription from Wat Khema in Sukhodaya says that merit makers or *nak pun* presented the following gifts: silk for the lectern to support the sacred books, one piece of cloth with embroidered borders to place under the *Mahāvessantara*. It also says that Amdæn Sen worshipped (*pūjā*) the *Vessantara* by having a copy of the text made (Griswold and Prasært 1992: 651–52).

The power of the written word in Siam is attested to in an account by the French traveler Nicolas Gervaise who wrote about Ayudhyā in 1688:

They have a remedy that they make with oil and a certain yellow powder, which they use for all prayers and then they put all round the patient a quantity of small pieces of paper on which are written phrases in Pāli that they claim have the power to drive out the devil which has caused the illness. (Gervaise 1989:130)

I hope that these short vignettes suffice to demonstrate that in the three major Theravādin regions of Sri Lanka, Burma and Siam, writing and manuscripts were viewed not only as important vessels for the message of the Buddha, but to varying extents as sacred objects bearing great power and religious merit, to be treated in a manner similar to relics or Buddha images.

### *Mahāyāna in Theravāda Lands*

What explains the veneration and proliferation of writing in these cases? Why did cultures shaped so heavily by Theravāda Buddhism, whose canonical texts do not place any importance on writing, begin, sometimes rather suddenly, to impart to writing a

patently hieratic function? I believe the evidence shows that one of the most important factors was the historical presence of Mahāyāna attitudes towards writing in these regions. Practices, ideas and iconography inspired by Mahāyāna texts had a strong impact in all the regions where writing went on to be regarded with the most reverence by Theravāda Buddhists. Furthermore, in many cases these attitudes towards the written word first arose exactly during the period when Mahāyāna influence was strongest. After presenting this evidence, I will strengthen my argument by showing that in the one area where Mahāyāna had the least impact, the northern Thai kingdom of Lan Na, writing was viewed with the least reverence by the Buddhist community.

#### Mahāyāna in Sri Lanka

Artifacts similar to and contemporary with the Golden Abhidhamma mentioned in the MV still exist in Sri Lanka, but they all contain Mahāyāna texts. A striking example is a set of golden plates from the tenth century inscribed with a Sanskrit text.<sup>25</sup> This cache is comprised of seven gold plates in excellent condition that were found at the Jetavanārāma at Anurādhapura, and the text has been identified as the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. It is surely not just a coincidence that both Kassapa's *Abhidhamma* and this text come from the same era. Rather, this is probably due to the acquisition on the part of writing itself of a sacred function proceeding from the influence of ideas formulated in Sanskrit Buddhist works that had reached their apogee at this particular moment in Sri Lankan history. Paranavitana, in the conclusion to his article on Mahāyāna Buddhism in Ceylon, concurs that "in the ninth and tenth centuries, Mahāyānism was particularly strong in Anurādhapura" (1928:70). This assessment is based not only upon literary evidence from such texts as the MV, but also upon archaeological and palaeographical remains. He brings to our attention a further

---

<sup>25</sup> For details about these plates, see Jayasuriya 1998.

number of inscribed metal plates, all from the eighth to the tenth centuries: early ninth century copper votive plates from inside a *stūpa* at Mihintale bearing fragmentary Sanskrit inscriptions in which the words *prajñāpāra[mitā]* and *bodhisattva* can clearly be made out; slightly later metal plaques inscribed with devotional hymns to deities such as Tārā and Avalokiteśvara which were found a few kilometres north of Anurādhapura inside a *stūpa* at Vijayārāma; and a copper plate from Anurādhapura containing a ninth century Tantric *mantra* in *devanāgarī* (Paranavitana 1928:43–46). Furthermore, the very inscription in which Kassapa's Pāli golden text is mentioned<sup>26</sup> suggests that the king was a strong supporter of the Abhayagiri Vihāra, which was inclined to accept newer Sanskrit works into its curriculum.<sup>27</sup> The monks of the Abhayagiri were, as early as the sixth century, interested in promoting Mahāyāna ideas, and specifically the cult of the book. Eight stone tablets that were found buried near the Dagoba at Abhayagiri contain *dhāraṇīs* of various kinds written in a script that is very similar to that used in the Pāla empire in the ninth century (Mudiyanse 1967:99). These may be considered to be further evidence that the kind of book worship discussed by Kinnard in his examination of the Pāla period in India and presented at the beginning of this article was also practiced in Sri Lanka. This conjecture is supported by the MV, which states that a sacred object called the *Dhammadhātu* was brought to the island from India during the reign of Silakala (r. 526–539 C.E.), which the Abhayagiri monks wished to venerate (MV Chap. 37). It is, unfortunately, unclear exactly what this *Dhammadhātu* was, but there is little doubt that it was a Mahāyāna text.<sup>28</sup> In this case, this would constitute the earliest reference in Pāli literature to a cult of

---

<sup>26</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. 1, 52.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of Mahāyāna influence on the Abhayagiri and other monasteries, see Rahula 1956:85–91.

<sup>28</sup> The *Nikāya-Saṃgraha* mentions a Vaitulyavāda text that was brought from India to Sri Lanka during the period in which the *Dhammadhātu* is said to have arrived (Mudiyanse 1967:6–7). A bronze label inscription in the Colombo museum

the book — here directed towards none other than a Mahāyāna text.

I turn now to more evidence that it was specifically Mahāyāna practices that shaped the Theravāda attitudes towards writing in Sri Lanka especially in the ninth through twelfth centuries. A gold leaf text found inside a *stūpa* near Kaṭusāya contains the Buddhist *Ye Dhammā* creed in Pāli, but there are certain Sanskritisms, according to Mudiyanse. This suggests that the author was influenced, perhaps unconsciously, by Mahāyāna ideas, even though the basic idiom is Theravāda. What is even more striking than the language, which after all could also represent intercourse with Sanskrit Hīnayāna Buddhism or even Hinduism, is the donor's wish that he be enabled to save all sentient beings (Mudiyanse 1967:95). This wish is primarily used in the Mahāyāna milieu, whereas in Theravāda environments, the merit is usually dedicated to specific beings, such as the donor and family members.<sup>29</sup>

There is a vast amount of iconographic evidence for the presence of Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism on the island especially from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, but also from as early as the third century (Mudiyanse 1967:1–10). There are scores of Buddha and Bodhisattva images from Sri Lanka that testify to the influence and popularity of Mahāyāna Buddhism especially during the period just mentioned, of which a few will be mentioned here to illustrate the phenomenon. Buddha images found at Seruvila and Mahiyangana both appear to have come from northeast India and feature the Buddhist

---

apparently bears the phrase “two leaves from the *Dharmma-Dhātu*” (Mudiyanse 1967:83) which would obviously suggest that this sacred object is indeed a manuscript. Bechert holds that, “we can safely assume that *Dharmadhātu* was used as the name of a Mahāyāna work of Indian origin which was written in Sanskrit, but all attempts to identify this book with a particular known to us have failed. . . .” (1977:365).

<sup>29</sup> This conforms to the pattern pointed out by Schopen (1997:38–41) in early Indian donative inscriptions, in which only Mahāyāna inscriptions mention a desire to help all beings in general.

creed in Pāla period Nāgarī characters, suggesting that they in fact came from somewhere in the Pāla empire (Mudiyanse 1967: 29–30). Mudiyanse mentions that Pāla Buddhist schools, which I have already shown to have essentially fetishized the worship of the book, were greatly influential in general on contemporary Ceylonese art (29). Numerous prominent members of the Mahāyāna pantheon are amply represented in Ceylonese art such as *Mañjuśrī*, *Avalokiteśvara*, *Tārā*, *Cundā*, and *Vajrapāṇi* (Mudiyanse 1967, Chap. 3). In the Nevill collection there is a bronze female divinity, probably from the 9–10th centuries that has been identified with Cundā. Of note is that she seems to be holding a book in her upper left hand, and another Cundā holds a book in her lower right hand (Mudiyanse 1967:66). A third bronze Cundā from the Nevill collection holds a book in her left hand (Mudiyanse 1967:67).

Finds such as these suggest that the environment in which king Kassapa's *Abhidhamma* plates were inscribed included the worship of divinities ubiquitous within the very Sanskrit texts such as the *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* that, unlike those of the Pāli *Tipiṭaka*, openly call for the fabrication and adoration of books. This ethos then must have seeped into the social segments responsible for the production of artifacts such as these Pāli gold plates.

### Mahāyāna in Burma

The historical situation in the Irrawaddy region lends further support to the theory that reverence for writing was greater in environments in which Mahāyāna ideas had at some point held sway. The Pāli texts written on gold plates from Śrī Kṣetra, and apparently intended for cultic use, come from an early Buddhist polity which although primarily Theravādin, was also home to other Buddhist teachings. A bronze image of Avalokiteśvara, dating from perhaps the seventh century (Ray 1936:41) and stone reliefs of the Buddha flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya in the Gupta style of about the same time (Ray 1936:90) have been unearthed during excava-

tions at this site. The bronze image also holds a manuscript in its second right hand, and an Avalokiteśvara from a terracotta votive tablet from Hmawza also seems to be holding a manuscript in the upper right hand (Chutiwongs 2002:103).

Let us now move to assess briefly the position of Mahāyāna Buddhism at the great Burmese capital of Pagan. This is the closest part of Southeast Asia to the regions that were under Pāla influence during the latter part of the first millennium — being just to the east of the empire. It is therefore understandable and indeed expected that there would be heavy influence of Pāla culture in the region, a conspicuous part of which was the prominent position of written texts in the practice and cult of Buddhism. Some statements by researchers who have written extensively on this topic can serve as an introduction:

During the period of the eighth to twelfth centuries A.D., streams of cultural influence from North East India penetrated throughout Asia, leaving its evidence in the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in the use of the Nāgarī alphabet, and in the elaborate system of imagery and worship. (Chutiwongs 2002:70)

The Burmese of Pagan no doubt absorbed, to a great extent, the deep-rooted Theravāda tradition of their forerunners, but they received at the same time cultural and religious influences from medieval North East India. Cult images and votive tablets, made after North East Indian models, are abundant among the material remains of early Pagan. Many of these votive tablets bear the Buddhist Creed written in Nāgarī and proto-Bengali scripts. North East India appears to have been an important source of religious and artistic inspiration for Pagan until the very last days of its glory. (Chutiwongs 2002:71)

Pagan's natural contacts from the first were overland with North India. Her Buddhist iconography, sculpture, votive tablets, bronzes, paintings, are all North Indian in origin, based on Gandhāran, Mathuran, and Pāla Bengal models. Her architecture, where it is not independent, links her to East Bengal and (perhaps) Orissa. (Luce 1969:61)

Even under the strongest purifying kings, Burmese Buddhism has tolerated an amazing degree of doctrinal variance, incorporating a number of Mahayanist, Sanskrit Hinayana, and Tantric beliefs. Rather than exclude, Burmese Buddhism absorbs competing ideas. (Ferguson and Mendelson 1981:62).

When Aniruddha (r. 1044–1077 C.E.) took the throne at Pagan, there were still Theravāda traditions left over from the Pyus, as well as Mahāyāna beliefs and cults in the area. It is possible that a sect that many sources claim had great influence at the time, the Aris, mixed Tantric cults with indigenous beliefs, and as such they may have stressed the importance of *dhāraṇīs* and other written forms of Buddhist texts that were believed to have effective power. Regardless of the strength of the Aris at this time, it is clear that Mahāyāna in some form was a notable force, for the king himself sponsored numerous votive tablets dedicated to Avalokiteśvara (Chutiwongs 2002:73). The king Kyanzittha (1084–1113 C.E.) supported the construction by his wife of the Abeyadana temple, a magnificent Mahāyāna monument replete with murals in the style of Bengal (Chutiwongs 2002:74). Even in his own Nagayon temple intended to glorify Theravāda Buddhism, built just as the *Tipiṭaka* was being purified under his aegis, Kyanzittha still placed a few Mahāyānist paintings of Tārās and Bodhisattvas (Luce 1969:312).

There are many early examples of terracotta votive tablets from the Pagan region in the centuries prior to Aniruddha that are written in a Pāla-influenced Nāgarī script (Luce 1969:97–98). These usually bear a Buddha image with the *ye dharmā* Buddhist credo in Sanskrit, which indicates not only that they were produced by people influenced by Mahāyāna ideas, but also that the addition of the written encapsulation of the Buddha's teachings was understood to increase the merit of the artifact. One of the most striking examples of the varying importance of the written word in the Theravāda and Mahāyāna worldviews is that as Theravāda influence grew in Pagan, from the time of Aniruddha in the middle of the eleventh century, the hieratic power of writing in this regard began to wane somewhat. Many of the votive tablets that were made during the transitional phase actually display multilingual inscriptions with ever more Pāli replacing the Sanskrit as time goes on. The Pāli (and sometimes Mon) portions almost always focus not on adding *Dhamma* verses to the tablets, but rather on the power of

the image alone to bring about the desired result (Luce 1969: 98–102). For example, a few inscriptions by Aniruddha contain the Pāli lines

This Blessed One is made by the great king, Siri Aniruddhadeva, with his own hands, for the sake of Deliverance. (Luce 1969:98)

And an official has written elsewhere

These 28 Buddhas were made by me, the Law-*saṃbheṇ*, in the hope of attaining Buddhahood. (Luce 1969:99)

Here the sponsors view the making of the Buddha image alone as sufficient in itself to lead to felicitous religious states, and the writing on them merely confirms this contention; it does not add merit to the project as the Mahāyāna practice of adding *ye dharmā* was intended to do. As I have been arguing, writing was still valued for its sacred power by the later Burmese, but it seems clear from this that it did experience a drop with the displacement of Mahāyāna.

From the latter part of the twelfth century, Theravāda Buddhism, under the influence of the “purified” *Saṅgha* from Sri Lanka, began irrevocably to outshine Mahāyāna Buddhism, which gradually waned in popularity and influence. This was compounded by the decline of Mahāyāna in influential North Eastern India under Muslim pressure. As it lost its status as an independent expression of the religion, however, Mahāyāna still maintained some influence upon the practices of Theravāda in both Burma and Sri Lanka, especially in the attitude of the faithful in these regions towards manuscripts and the written word in a religious context.

Mahāyāna in Thailand

The gold leaves that were found buried inside a *stūpa*, the inscription speaking of the veneration of the Vessantara text, the tablets with the Buddhist creed, and the other Siamese examples presented in this article were found in an area of Thailand that was heavily influenced by Khmer civilization. This region came into contact with Mahāyāna ideas and texts that, until at least the



middle of the fourteenth century, were flourishing in such heartland areas as Lopburi, whose “culture represented an amorphous amalgam of Mahayana and an older Burmese Hinayana Buddhism with Angkorian brahmanical religion and the Indian arts and sciences” (Wyatt 1984:64). Some sense of the role of written materials in the Khmer-influenced Thai world can be garnered from a Khmer-script Sanskrit inscription from Wat Maheyang in Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja (Cœdès 1924, Vol. 2, item XXVII). Although fragmentary, it is clear that it details some of the duties of the monks at the monastery. Included are such things as doing meritorious deeds that have been prescribed for them (*puṇyaṅ cānyad api pradiṣṭam*), protecting the people (*prajāpālanam*), and seeing both wanted and unwanted things as equal (*Iṣṭāniṣṭasamatvam*). Line 3, which mentions both the Mahāyāna cult of the perfections (*Pāramitās*) and writing, is most important for the present purposes:

... (*p*)āramitārccanam saha maṣīpatrārppaṇam lekhanam iḥyāgastimahātmano  
dvijagaṇasyānnañc ...

... the cult of the perfections, writing and the procuring of leaves and ink,  
providing for the high caste followers of the great sage Agastī ...

There is ample evidence of Khmer advocacy of Mahāyāna Buddhism alongside Hinduism and Theravāda, in particular during the period in which they were most influential in central Thailand. By the tenth century C.E., Buddhist personages seem to have been regular players at the royal Angkorean courts (Chutiwongs 2002:213). The religion at Angkor at the time was highly eclectic. One finds inscriptions mentioning in the same breath consecrations of images of Viṣṇu and the Buddha, as well as invocations to Śiva and the Buddha occurring on different parts of the same inscription (Chutiwongs 2002:214). The reign of Jayavarman VII (1181–c.1220 C.E.) saw the king officially adopt Mahāyāna Buddhism as the state religion, and he considered himself to be in the vein of Aśoka, putting a lot of effort into the construction of public works out of his great compassion for the people (Chandler 1992:59–62). Although Mahāyāna declined fairly rapidly after his reign under pressure from a

Shaivite revival and the triumph of Theravāda by the beginning of the fourteenth century, it did leave a strong mark on Cambodia and its dependencies due to the fervor and energy of Jayavarman. He was careful to use Mahāyāna ideas and iconography in his major works, such as the temples that he erected in honor of his parents. For his mother he dedicated a temple to Prajñāpāramitā and for his father, Dharanindravarman, who was apparently a fervent Buddhist as well (Chandler 1992:55) he built a temple to Lokeśvara (Avalokiteśvara). This signified the conjunction of wisdom and compassion, the two pillars of Mahāyāna Buddhism — and suggested that he was a product of these two great qualities (Chandler 1992:62–63). Jayavarman thus left a strong imprint of Mahāyāna Buddhism on the landscape and culture of the regions that came under his rule. Wyatt has noted (1984:27) that the religion in central Thailand still bears the influence of the Khmer Mahāyāna traditions that held sway for many years, such as the integration of Sanskrit instead of Pāli terms into the Tai languages of the region. I would add, of course, the attitudes towards the written word to these influences.

### The Mon and Early Thailand

Going back even earlier, the *Dhammacakka* wheels and other Pāli lithic epigraphy produced by the Mons in Thailand can be seen to have emerged in a world that was also no stranger to Mahāyāna ideas. By the end of the eighth century, Mahāyāna Buddhist influence was felt in the architecture and iconography of the Mon Dvāravatī region, which might have emerged through contact with Srivijaya and the Pāla empire (Vallibhotama 1986:231).

Although there are no known inscriptions from the region containing evidence of Mahāyāna beliefs, titles of kings were usually in Sanskrit and numerous Bodhisattva images exist that testify to some traces of a Mahāyāna cult in ancient Dvāravatī (Chutiwongs 2002:152). This cult was strengthened over time through contact with surrounding Mahāyāna cultures in the eighth century and later

as attested to by the new features recognizable in Bodhisattva images that suggest direct influence of developments that were going on at the time in the Pāla empire (Chutiwongs 2002:152). There is at least one known example of an Avalokiteśvara image from Dvāravatī holding a book, and based upon comparison with similar images in surrounding areas, a second one in the British Museum may have held a book in his missing hand (Chutiwongs 2002:174).

#### The Northern Thai Kingdom of Lan Na

Finally, I would like to add another vector to the argument that I have been making. Not only do we find significant Mahāyāna influence in the Theravāda areas in which written Pāli texts were venerated as cultic objects, but in the area of northern Thailand in which writing appears to have played the smallest role in the religious practices of the society at large and to have been viewed with the least amount of reverence, Mahāyāna Buddhism has historically been all but non-existent.

There are a number of reasons to believe that writing was not greatly valued in Lan Na, and that manuscripts were seldom worshipped. Perhaps most striking is the fact that the most important Pāli chronicle from the Lan Na capital of Chiang Mai in the sixteenth century, the *Jinakālamālī* (Buddhadatta 1962), records that the library that was built to house the *Tipiṭaka* redacted at what Thais reckon as the eighth Buddhist council around 1477 C.E. became completely dilapidated barely fifty years later. The manuscripts themselves that are extant from shortly after this period are never adorned or illuminated and the writing possesses no calligraphic tradition, in marked opposition to the elegant Khmer-script Pāli manuscripts from Siam, and certainly to the Burmese *Kammavācā*. Furthermore, whereas the MV records the construction of over 130 libraries, the JKM records the construction of only five.

The one gesture in the JKM towards sacred writing is the story of a golden *Piṭaka*. However, even in this case it is merely said that the king had a golden *Piṭaka* made; the only indication that

there was some importance attached to the item is the inclusion of two words *mahāmahaṃ katvā* telling us that the king “made a festival.” There is no further description of the festival, and there is no evidence left today of the book or anything connected to it. This is quite unlike the situation in Sri Lanka mentioned earlier.

Again, in contrast to similar passages in the MV, accounts of the restoration of Chiang Mai at the turn of the nineteenth century, after centuries of war with the Burmese, make no mention of manuscripts. The early nineteenth-century *Chiang Mai Chronicle* says that,

the temples and institutions of Buddhism, monasteries, ubosatha, Buddha images and cetiya were destroyed and dilapidated and falling down in great number, ever since s. 1138, the *rwai san* year (1776), until s. 1158, a *rwai si* year (1796), when the three brother princes came there to reestablish the city and the domain. (8.01)

It seems from this that the author did not consider libraries and the written record of the Buddha’s words to be part of this list of “the institutions of Buddhism.” The MV, on the other hand, focuses often on the importance of strengthening the literary record after periods of privation. For example, at MV 81.40, the thirteenth century king Vijayabāhu III is deeply upset that so many books have been destroyed by foreign invaders. He gathers people together who have good memories and they write down in books what they know about the doctrine. They are paid one gold *kahāpana* for each division.

*“Laṅkāḍīpamhi saddhammasaṃyuttaṃ bahu potthakaṃ  
nāsitaṃ parasattūhi” iti saṃviggamānaśo  
dhāraṇaṇāṇasaṃpanne saddhāvante bahussute  
kosajjarahite cārusīghalekhanakovide  
upāsake tadaññe ca bahū potthakalekhake  
ekato saṃnipādetvā, tehi sabbehi bhūpati  
sādaraṃ caturāsītīdhamma-kkhandhasahassakaṃ  
sādhu lekhāpayi, dhammakkhandhasaṃkhyāya tāya so  
datvāna tattake sabbe tesaṃ soṇṇakahāpane  
dhammapūjaṃ pi kāretvā puññabhāraṃ ca saṃcini.*

Thinking “Many books in Laṅkā connected to the true Dhamma are destroyed by our enemies,” the king became upset and having gathered together learned laymen who were endowed with knowledge and good memory, who were pure and bereft of idleness, and who knew how to write quickly and beautifully, as well as other scribes, the lord of the world had them reverentially write down the 84,000 divisions of the Dhamma well. Giving gold coins to them reckoned based on the number of divisions of the Dhamma and having made obeisance to the Dhamma, he accumulated merit.

The ambivalent attitude displayed towards written Buddhist texts in the northern Thai sources is strongly endorsed by the popular *Māleyya* story. The Pāli *Māleyyatheravatthu* probably originated in Lan Na in the late fifteenth century<sup>30</sup> and reflects the concerns of people from that period. In an illuminating passage that provides a remarkably clear window onto Buddhist practice at the time, the Arahant Māleyya goes to heaven and finally meets the future Buddha Metteyya, who asks him how human beings make merit, to which the monk replies:

Great king, some human beings in Rose-Apple Island give alms, some preserve morality, (or) give the gift of The Truth, keep the Uposatha day(s), make images of the Buddha, build monasteries or residences (for the Order), give rains-residences, robes, almsfood (or) medicine, tend the Bodhi-tree, build *stūpas*, shrines, parks (for the Order), causeways (or) walkways (for meditation), dig wells (or) canals, give (the monastic) requisites (or) the ten-fold gift, look after their mother and father, offer sacrifice for the sake of dead relatives, worship the Three Jewels, have their son enter the Monastic Order (as a novice), or worship the Buddha-image. (Collins 1993:84)

If making and worshipping manuscripts had been viewed as important religious activities in the society in which this text was produced, surely they would have been included here. Finally, I am

---

<sup>30</sup> For a detailed study of the sources and provenance of the Māleyya story and its Pāli versions, see Chapter 3 in Brereton 1995. She notes that many manuscripts of this work from Lan Na as well as an old Nissaya from 1516 C.E. are still extant. Saddhatissa says that the text as we now have it was probably written in Lan Na around 1500, but was based upon earlier, less detailed tellings from Sri Lanka (Saddhatissa 1974:215).

not aware of any significant *stūpas* with canonical Pāli passages or the *ye dhammā* verse placed inside them that have been found in this region.<sup>31</sup>

This state of affairs must be connected to the negligible amount of Mahāyāna influence that has been felt in this region: Mahāyāna iconography is conspicuously absent, Pāli words such as *Dhamma* and *Nibbāna* occur in the vernacular far more frequently than they do in Central Thai, which prefers the Sanskrit forms such as *Dharma* and *Nirvāṇa*, and the chronicles make no mention of Mahāyāna. In short, there does not appear ever to have been any significant Mahāyāna presence in Lan Na except possibly at the very southern edge of the kingdom in Haripuñjaya. Consequently, the more reverential Mahāyāna attitudes towards writing do not seem to have been imbibed by the culture.

---

<sup>31</sup> There has been a lot of interest in recent years in Pali palm-leaf manuscripts from Lan Na (von Hinüber 1983, 1990, 1993, 1996a), amongst which can be found some of the oldest examples of Pali manuscripts extant today, including dozens from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The existence of these artifacts does not, however, mean that writing was commonly used and even less does it indicate that it was venerated at the center of some cultic practice. That these old examples still exist may actually be because they were used *less* over the years than their counterparts in other areas of Southeast Asia, and hence afforded fewer opportunities for breakage or loss. Their existence is also due to the vicissitudes of history (for example the Burmese systematically destroyed the cultural heritage of Siam in the eighteenth century) and possibly even the particular climactic conditions of the area, which is very much less wet than, say, Sri Lanka. Many of these manuscripts include colophons that attest to the importance of making the item, but this does not tell us much about the role of these items in society-at-large because obviously the small group of people involved in their production would feel that this task is important. In fact, these colophons suggest that much of the impetus for manuscript production came from elite monks who were ordained into forest-dwelling lineages brought directly from Sri Lanka — hence they would have been influenced by Sinhalese attitudes towards the scriptures (see my forthcoming book on this topic, Veidlinger 2006).

### Conclusion

The reports of travellers, inscriptions, local chronicles and archaeological evidence show that the religious import of writing in Sri Lanka, Burma and Siam was greater than in northern Thailand. References to writing, scribes and libraries and their veneration are far more numerous and central in chronicles such as the Lankan *Mahāvamsa*, the Burmese *Sāsanavamsa*, and even the Siamese *Saddhammasaṅgaha* than in chronicles of northern Thai provenance such as the *Jinakālamālī*. Reliquaries have been found in all of these areas with inscribed plaques inside them intended to sanctify the edifice with the *Dhamma-body* of the Buddha as manifest through the written letters of key canonical pericopes, however our knowledge to date suggests that these are far less common in Lan Na. There is also evidence that the physical texts were treated with greater reverence in Lanka, Burma and Siam than in Lan Na. I have suggested that one important reason for these discrepancies is that the iconography, Sanskrit texts, monastic lineages and other features generally associated with Mahāyāna Buddhism had at one point great influence in the former areas, but was never a strong force in Lan Na. Mahāyāna therefore never had the opportunity to plant its ancient respect for the written word in the Buddhist society of northern Thailand.

This study is a first attempt to assess the impact that Mahāyāna attitudes towards writing had upon the main areas of Theravāda Buddhist concentration. It is by no means comprehensive and I do not wish to suggest that it was only the effects of Mahāyāna ideals and practices that generated the subsequent history of the written word. I have not taken into consideration in this study the purely internal, local developments that may have occurred, the individual personalities of monks and rulers that would have shaped this ethos, nor have I examined other outside influences besides Mahāyāna, such as European, Muslim and Chinese civilization. Nevertheless, it seems clear that there was within the pool of influences an unduly strong role played by Mahāyāna Buddhism in the shaping

of the way the written word was approached by Theravāda Buddhists in much of Southeast Asia.

Department of Religious Studies  
California State University, Chico  
Chico, CA 95929-0740  
USA  
dveidlinger@csuchico.edu

DANIEL VEIDLINGER

## REFERENCES

- Bechert, Heinz  
1977 "Mahāyāna Literature in Sri Lanka: The Early Phase." In Lewis Lancaster (ed.), *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Buddhist Studies, 361–368.
- Bechert, Heinz, Daw Khin Khin Su, and Daw Tin Tin Myint  
1979 *Burmese Manuscripts*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Bode, Mabel  
1897 *Sāsanavaṃsa*. London: Pali Text Society.
- Brereton, Bonnie  
1995 *Thai Tellings of Phra Malai*. Tempe, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Brown, Robert L.  
1996 *The Dvāravatī Wheels of the Law and the Indianization of Southeast Asia*. Leiden: Brill.
- Buddhadatta  
1962 *Jinakālamālipakaraṇam*. (In Pāli.) London: Pali Text Society.
- Chandler, David  
1992 *A History of Cambodia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Charūk Nai Prathet Thai (5 Vols.)  
1986 Bangkok: National Library.
- Chutiwongs, Nandana  
2002 *The Iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Mainland South East Asia*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.
- Cœdès, George  
1924 *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam*. (2 Vols.) Bangkok: Vajirañāna National Library.
- Collins, Steven  
1992 "Notes on Some Oral Aspects of Pali Literature." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35:121–135.



- 1993 *Brah Māleyyadevatheravatthum. Journal of the Pali Text Society* 18:1–96.
- Conze, Edward
- 1975 *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Duroiselle, Charles
- 1921 *A List of Inscriptions Found in Burma*. Rangoon: Archaeological Survey of Burma.
- Falk, Harry
- 1993 *Schrift im Alten Indien*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Ferguson, John P. and E. Michael Mendelson
- 1981 “Masters of the Buddhist Occult: The Burmese Weikzas.” *Contributions to Asian Studies* 16:62–80.
- Geiger, Wilhelm
- 1908 *The Mahāvamsa*. London: Pali Text Society.
- 1925 *Cūlavamsa I*. London: Pali Text Society.
- 1927 *Cūlavamsa II*. London: Pali Text Society.
- 1930 *The Cūlavamsa II*. London: Pali Text Society.
- Gervaise, Nicolas
- 1989 *Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*. John Villiers (trans.). Bangkok: White Lotus Press.
- Goody, Jack
- 1977 *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Griswold, A.B., and Prasārt na Nagara
- 1992 *Epigraphic and Historical Studies*. Bangkok: Historical Society.
- Hinüber, Oskar von
- 1983 “Pali Texts of Canonical Manuscripts from Northern Thailand.” *Journal of the Siam Society* 71:75–88.
- 1989 *Der Beginn der Schrift und frühe Schriftlichkeit in Indien*. Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur.
- 1990 “On some colophons of old Lanna Pali Manuscripts.” *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference of Thai Studies*, 4:56–79.
- 1993 “Pali und Lanna in den Kolophonen alter Palmblatthandschriften aus Nord-Thailand.” In *Indogermanica et Italica*, ed. G. Meiser, Innsbruck: Universität Innsbruck, 223–236.
- 1996a “Chips from Buddhist Workshops: Scribes and Manuscripts from Northern Thailand.” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 22:35–57.
- 1996b *A Handbook of Pali Literature*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

- Jayasuriya, M.H.F.  
 1988 *The Jetavanārāma Gold Plates*. Kelaniya: University of Kelaniya.
- Jayawickrama, N.A.  
 1968 *The Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror*. (Trans. of *Jinakālamāli*). London: Pali Text Society.
- Kinnard, Jacob  
 1999 *Imaging Wisdom: Seeing and Knowing in the Art of Indian Buddhism*. Richmond: Curzon.
- Klimburg-Salter, Deborah  
 1990 "The Gilgit Manuscript Covers and the 'Cult of the Book.'" *South Asian Archaeology, 1987: Proceedings of the the Ninth International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists*, 815–830.
- Kumar, Bimalendra  
 1992 *Gandhavaṃso*. Delhi: Istarna Buka Linkarsa.
- Lieberman, Victor  
 1976 "A new look at the Sāsanavaṃsa." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39:137–149.
- Losty, Jeremiah P.  
 1982 *The Art of the Book in India*. London: The British Library.
- Luce, Gordon H.  
 1969 *Old Burma — Early Pagan*. Vol. One. New York, NY: Artibus Asiae.
- McLuhan, Marshall  
 1964 *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Mirando, A.H.  
 1985 *Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo.
- Mudiyanse, Nandasena  
 1967 *Mahāyāna Monuments in Ceylon*. Colombo: M.D. Gunasena.
- Ong, Walter  
 1982 *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge.
- Paranavitana, S.  
 1928 "Mahāyānism in Ceylon." *Ceylon Journal of Science*. Vol. II, Part I. Colombo.
- Rahula, Walpola  
 1956 *History of Buddhism in Ceylon: The Anuradhapura Period*. Colombo: M.D. Gunasena.
- Ray, N.R.  
 1936 *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma*. Amsterdam: H.J. Paris.

- 1946 *Theravāda Buddhism in Burma*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.
- Rhys Davids, T.W.
- 1890 (trans.) *The Questions of King Milinda*. Part I. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 1894 (trans.) *The Questions of King Milinda*. Part II. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Saddhatissa, H.
- 1974 "Pali Literature of Thailand." In L. Cousins *et al.* (eds.), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 211–225.
- Schopen, Gregory
- 1978 "The Five Leaves of the Buddhabalādhānaprātihāryavikurvāṇirdeśa Sūtra Found at Gilgit." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 5:319–336.
- 1985 "The Bodhigarbhāṅkārakṣa and Vimaloṣṇīsa Dhāraṇīs in Indian Inscriptions." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie* 29:119–149.
- 1997 *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Sengupta, Sukumar
- 1994 *Buddhism in South-East Asia: Mainly based on epigraphic sources*. Calcutta: Atisha Memorial Publication Society.
- Seyfort-Ruegg, David
- 2004 "Aspects of the Investigation of the (earlier) Indian Mahāyāna." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27(1): 3–62.
- Singer, Noel
- 1991 "Palm Leaf Manuscripts of Myanmar (Burma)." *Arts of Asia* (Hong Kong) 21(1):133–140.
- 1993 "Kammavaca Texts: Their covers and Binding Ribbons." *Arts of Asia*, May–June, 97–106.
- Skilling, Peter
- 1997 "New Pāli Inscriptions from South-east Asia." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 23:123–157.
- Stargardt, Janice
- 1995 "The Oldest Known Pali Texts, 5th–6th Century." *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 21:199–213.
- Strong, John
- 2004 *Relics of the Buddha*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Suphaphan Na Bangchang
- 1986 *Wiwathanakan Ngan Khian Phasa Bali Nai Prathet Thai*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Rachawithalay.

Than Tun

- 1988 *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma*. Whitting Bay: Kiscadale.

Trainor, Kevin

- 1997 *Relics, Ritual and Representation in Buddhism: Re-materialising the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vallibhotama, Srisakra

- 1986 "Political and Cultural Continuities at Dvāravatī Sites." In David Marr and A.C. Milner (eds.), *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 229–238.

Veidlinger, Daniel

- 2006 *Spreading the Dhamma: Writing, Orality and Textual Transmission in Buddhist Northern Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Walser, Joseph

- 2005 *Nāgārjuna in Context: Mahāyāna Buddhism and Early Indian Culture*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Wyatt, David K.

- 1984 *Thailand: A Short History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

# SPIRITUAL SURRENDER: FROM COMPANIONSHIP TO HIERARCHY IN THE HISTORY OF BEKTASHISM

ALBERT DOJA

## *Summary*

The system of beliefs and practices related to Bektashism seems to have corresponded to a kind of liberation theology, whereas the structure of Bektashi groups corresponded more or less to the type of religious organization conventionally known as charismatic groups. It becomes understandable therefore that their spiritual tendency could at times connect with and meet social, cultural and national perspectives. In turn, when members of the previously persecuted religious minority will acquire a degree of religious and political respectability within society at large, the doctrines of heterodoxy and liberation theology fade into the background. In the end, the heirs of the heterodox promoters of spiritual reform and social movement turn into followers and faithful defenders of a legitimate authority. They become the spokespeople for an institutionalized orthodoxy whose support is sought by the political regime.

## *Introduction*

Religious studies specialized in Bektashism, being largely the domain of either Orientalists or religious scholars, remain stuck somewhere between ethnocentrism, empiricism, historicism and literalism, and have thereby brought little distinctive anthropological and sociological analysis to bear successfully on the practical realities and political ideologies of its religious projects. They tend to be affected by what Roland Barthes (1993) called the “virus of essence,” very much oriented towards a folklorist paradigm of *Reliktforschung* (Bausinger 1993), concerned with a search for the remains of ancient times. The main interest of such an unanalytical approach, which often piles up uncritically all kinds of trite evidence, seems only to be in correcting either the mistakes of Western specialists or the presumptions of local scholars on one or another point of detail.

This is clearly visible in recent years with the spate of books published in Turkish and in Western languages about Bektashism and Alevism, many of them by Bektashis or sympathizers of Bektashism, for which an approach will remain comprehensible and legitimate as long as it reproduces an apologetic discourse or aims at revealing the essence or the origins of Bektashism. Some may offer new interpretations and political slants which could provide material for lively debates, but their insufficiency is evident, since they obscure the properly political dimensions of the phenomenon and are accompanied by a double naturalization.

To begin with, the Bektashis are usually taken for granted as a community once and for all. After umpteen “preliminary” accounts of studies regarding Bektashism (e.g., Kressing 2002), suggestions for further research are still advocated on the single account of the mutual influences between the everlasting Bektashi and the different religions present in Anatolia or in the Balkans and their development in the course of time. A supposed substratum of folk religion, the highly syncretistic character, or the exclusive heterodox nature of Bektashism are unquestionably assumed, and seen as the continuous reactions to centuries of foreign dominance and hostile outside influences, leading to an immutable inertness and preservation of archaic features deemed to characterize the Bektashis’ cultural and religious life. So it is that most specialist studies intend nothing more than to “convey a reasonable general impression that most Bektashis could accept” (Norton 2001).

Moreover, many works regard Bektashism as self-explanatory, expressing “academically” what the Bektashis themselves claim “religiously.” They are always declared victims par excellence, systematically oppressed by political or religious authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, they are constantly made out to be the best preservers of both local cultural and universal moral values.

If Islamic brotherhoods have always occupied an important place in social, economic, and political life from the old Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey, throughout Turkish history, the Bektashi have never failed to claim their foundations as exclusive centres of culture and

education. In this way, the Bektashis and other dervishes have come to be seen as the providers of many things. They converted nomads from shamanism to Islam, extended social and emotional support to new converts, particularly the Janissaries, provided food and shelter to travellers, proposed concrete saints for popular piety to focus on, and at the end of the nineteenth century, constituted a source of support to the Young Turks and Turkish nationalism. Many painstaking efforts have been made to show that certain Bektashis “could provide a source of legitimation against an established government” or even “prove the existence of a civil society in the Ottoman Empire” (Faroqhi 1995).

In present days, in most situations, the Bektashis, defined against Sunni Islam, present themselves as essentially modern and democrat, overall defenders of human rights and gender equality. Tolerance, love, and respect for all men and women created in God’s image and in whom God manifests himself, regardless of race, religion, or nation, as well as hatred of hypocrisy and inner religion of the heart, help for those in need, kindness, honesty, solidarity, equality, fraternity, freedom, democracy, and the like, all are frequent messages that Bektashis seek to convey as unique humanistic traits of their ideology.

Certain scholars on Bektashism have given their support to or reproduced these essentializing identity and ideological discourses without questioning them. At first, the relative benevolence of Western scholarship towards the Bektashis is partly explained by the sympathy they may inspire because of their politically correct character. The Bektashis answer especially well to certain academic or political as well as cosmopolitan or nationalist expectations, to the point of their claims being largely considered, if not progressive, at least legitimate. Moreover, the example of the Bektashis seems to pertinently illustrate the meeting of Western academic projections with the political interests of a religious movement, a shortcoming denounced with accuracy by Elise Massicard in the case of Alevism in contemporary Turkey (Massicard 2005). Western aca-

demia has often reproduced the Bektashi historical vulgate, making of its protagonists successively the promoters of the nation, the allies of secularity or the spearheads of democracy, perhaps for the same political or ideological reasons as their fellow Bektashis.

Consequently, we must reverse the question and precisely get rid of that apologetic vision of the origin and essence on which many are so enthusiastic, in order to be able to explain why at a given time the community of a religious identity becomes a relevant medium for spiritual, cultural, social, or political mobilization. What the Bektashis hold for their identity and their history must be treated as a discursive ideological construction, for we can reveal their possible situational relevance or their sociological and political determinants. To build a relatively autonomous analysis of Bektashi discourses, it is necessary to study the context that produces such ritualized discourses and practices, to convert the interpretations of the actors into data to be interpreted, and to incorporate in the subject of study their attempts to organize a memory and their strategies to balance or reverse power relationships. Against most available research on Bektashism, it is time to move from the historical account of the dervish units and their symbolic practices towards the analysis of the political and sociological dynamics of their production and reproduction. Far from politicizing and ethnicizing Bektashi issues, a critical and analytical approach must reveal and de-essentialize the hidden ideological undercurrents of discourses mobilizing around religious identity and political projects.

A different picture may result, indeed, from the basic assumption that different types of social organisation and ways of thinking are compatible with the political establishment to varying degrees and react to it in different ways. Within the social sciences, Max Weber already made the difference in worldly success between the Catholic and the Protestant world-view central to his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 2002), whereas anthropology has been constantly interested in the ways that social organisations might be compared, emphasizing that the investigation of



living phenomena are absolutely reliant upon comparing and establishing the differences between relevant groups.<sup>1</sup>

Eventually it is perhaps the modern views of the nation-state and all of its institutionalized mythologies that has confused, erased, desecrated and demolished our understanding of the local definitions and categories of group identity, as articulated in everyday life. Whereas history is regarded as a technique that makes it possible to reveal the origin, and thus the very meaning of the real definition and the true nature of Bektashism, beyond this meaning, what is finally at issue is the inclusion of Bektashism into the nation and into the categories of negotiation and declaration of identity and otherness. In these conditions, many supposedly well established facts concerning historical developments of Bektashi doctrine and organization have to be severely contested and questioned, as resulting from the deliberate use of myths for political, ideological and religious purposes.

---

<sup>1</sup> A few exceptions apart, only texts written in a dervish milieu contain information about holy men and their doings, and these texts were written not for historical but religious purposes. However, in recent studies by contemporary Turkish scholars, such as the thorough commentaries on the *Vilayet-Name* of Hadji Bektash or the comprehensive study of pre-Islamic motifs in Bektashi legend (Golpinarli 1958; Ocak 1983), a narrative or group of stories will be followed in their passage through different literatures, while the researcher tries to reconstruct the political reasons, in the broadest sense, why the narrative was put together in one fashion in a given context and in quite a different manner somewhere else. After having rediscovered the old truth that many apparently non-political acts have a political dimension, authors attempting these kinds of analyses are no longer concerned with the concrete details of dervish life, but with the great debates of the time, such as the tension between orthodox and heterodox world views or between the mystics and holy men who have accepted integration within mainstream Muslim society and the mystic who refused such an accommodation. This novel type of elaboration is very attractive, particularly given the ordinarily pedestrian proceedings of many Ottoman historians. Yet the danger of arbitrarily attributing to fifteenth-century writers of dervish legends, motivations which stem indirectly from late twentieth-century concerns is not to be minimized. (See Faroqhi 1995.)

A series of historical incidents like the sudden appearance and rapid spread of the Bektashi group of dervishes during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, their transformation into a powerful Sufi order during Ottoman times, and the developments to which Bektashism has been subjected in late Ottoman period as well as in independent Albania and in modern Turkey, still remain issues that require explanations. One of the main reasons that a thorough critical analysis using explanatory insights from historical anthropology and sociology may prove to be important is the possibility it offers to combine the study of Bektashism both as a creed within Islam, as a kind of liberation theology, as a quasi-political movement and partner suited to national movements, and as an ideological power base to reassert political authority. This means that the discussion must deal with the main groups within society in a coherent analytical framework in terms of ideology, organization, government and opposition, something that is often omitted in discussions of Ottoman society.

I do not seek here to reassess the arguments over the available Bektashi material, nor am I able to treat in anything but the most superficial way the fascinating but complex world of Ottoman history. I do believe, however, that we are immensely in need of a comprehensive analytical model to understand the meaning and purpose of such a coherent ideology subsumed under the rubric of religion, a model that must explain indeed a great deal of the diverse religious paths that I believe are characteristic of the modern world today. To this aim, this article, taking the development of master-disciple relationship within Bektashism as a working example, is part of a larger critical and explanatory analysis aimed at revealing that the variations in the course of Bektashism's history probably best exemplify such a transformational model involving many of its complex theological, ideological, cultural, social, and political aspects.

Without being necessarily concerned with genealogy, my position is anthropological, i.e. seeking by a comparative approach to benefit from the discontinuity between the distinct historical vicissitudes of

Bektashism in order to discover typological homologies which may show them to be different realizations of a similar pattern, thus making it possible to discover a structure of common fundamental constraints to a spiritual tendency to meet social, cultural, national, and political perspectives. The search for this common background thus does not erase the differences and their distinctiveness, which an anthropologically informed approach to history rather aims to locate, since it is their reality that only makes it possible to elucidate the homologies.

Heterodox religious movements and the institution of new forms of religion, as in the case of mystical orders of Islam like the Bektashis, are decisive for understanding the history of religions in Southeast European area. Understanding this history in turn could bring forth insights for understanding the current situation in which group identities are being negotiated and redefined. While mystics do not partake in, or directly express class struggle, their heterodoxy, over and beyond the intensity and power of their beliefs or the radical character of their opposition to the established religion, always did and still necessarily does crystallize political, social and cultural discontent which is, in turn, very often either ethnicized along nationalist lines or politicized along power forces or both.

The point is not only that religion as a cultural symbolic system uses political and other resources that show a power base. More importantly, religion, in its own field, has a symbolic structure, which, as Bourdieu put it (Bourdieu 1971), reproduces the distribution of resources and power from the non-symbolic mundane field in a transformed form. To better appreciate this we must arguably begin by attempting to comprehend the underlying significance of the structures of religious representation and mediation, and the implication of their change in support of either cultural orderings or order-questioning projects in human society.

*Background*

The Bektashi order of dervishes originated as one of the many Sufi movements of Islam that developed in the Middle East from the eleventh and twelfth centuries onwards (Karamustafa 1994). At this time a number of missionary precursors, known as the Saints of Khorassan, infiltrated Anatolia where they paved the way for dervish groups like the Bektashis. The name of the order is derived from the legendary founder Hadji Bektash, even though, as in many other cases concerning Sufi hagiography, Hadji Bektash was not the actual founder of the order but a patron saint chosen at a later date. He is himself supposed to have come originally from Khorassan in north-east Iran and lived in Anatolia in the second half of the thirteenth century (Melikoff 1998). The description of his *Vilayet-Name* corresponds to that of the typical wandering dervishes known as Iranian Kalenders or Anatolian Abdals in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Ocak 1995). The dervishes who followed him are called Abdal and from the very start, he is called “leader” (*pir*) of Anatolian Abdals.

Apparently Bektashism must have started during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as a mixture of shamanism inherited from the Turkic tribes of Khorassan with popular beliefs in such a way as to appeal to villagers and the lower class of the Anatolian population. In its region of origin Bektashism must have mingled with local beliefs, and it is not surprising that besides different Sufi doctrines and practices, many religious traditions may have contributed to the development and appearance of Bektashism, including ancient Turkic elements preserving pre-Islamic and non-Islamic beliefs and customs originating in shamanism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Christianity and ancient religions (Birge 1937). In Anatolia, and later in the Balkans, Bektashism encountered further Neoplatonist, Christian and Nestorian influences. Being receptive to many elements of these religions, the Bektashis also incorporated anthropomorphic and cabalistic doctrines of letter and number symbolism that can be traced to Hurufism (Melikoff 1992:163–74; Popovic

and Veinstein 1995:39–53), combined with an extremist Shiite credo that linked devotion to the divinity of Ali with beliefs in anthropomorphism, the manifestation of God in human form, reincarnation and metempsychosis (Melikoff 2001:97–120).

Such a considerable number of doctrines and practices of heterogeneous origins has led to heated disputes between specialists over the prevalence of one influence or the other and finally to claims that the Bektashi order did not have a well defined theology, that it could accommodate much local influence, and that its fundamental character is an all-encompassing syncretism (Melikoff 1992; Popovic and Veinstein 1995). Many authors have regarded Bektashism as an external layer over pre-Islamic, Christian or other beliefs.<sup>2</sup> In Turkish scholarship, however, from the very start Western studies were severely criticized for having attributed the specificities of Bektashism to Christian traditions (Koprulu 1926), and Turkish nationalists and folklorists have insisted on the Turkish

---

<sup>2</sup> In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, early European scholars more particularly found in Bektashism a worship that they linked to crypto-Christian traditions surviving in Anatolia, which would also explain the special missionary interest in their regard (Kieser 2001). Some perceived parallels, among others, to the Christian Trinity and the Twelve Disciples, or between Christian devotion to the Virgin Mary and Bektashi devotion to Fatima, wife of Ali and daughter of Muhammad, have led many commentators to presume that these features were taken from Christianity and simply given a superficial Islamic veneer. Such syncretism is further claimed to have made Bektashism acceptable to many non-Muslims who would have found the austere teachings of Sunni orthodoxy unattractive. Authors holding such views tend to think that Bektashism turned into a refuge for many Christians and that the syncretistic forms of sectarian Islam became an appropriate bridge for the transition from Christianity to Islam. The many traits of Christianity that had been incorporated into Bektashism and other Sufi groups are supposed to have contributed significantly to the shaping of popular Islamic beliefs, thus facilitating the conversion to Islam of the Christian populations in Anatolia and the Balkans, which are assumed to have been previously only superficially Christianized. In Eastern Europe, for instance, the population remained generally faithful to Eastern Christian Orthodoxy, except for some Albanian, Bosnian, and Bulgarian groups, but those who did convert to Islam under the Ottoman Empire

origins of Bektashism. Still, a prevailing syncretism between ancient, pre-Islamic Turkic, and Islamic elements in Bektashi lore is argued again on the account of the encounter of pre-Islamic Turks with “high religions” in Central Asia and the position of the Bektashis at the crossroads of different cultures, while the question of shamanic remainders is claimed to be far less important than has been usually assumed (Ocak 1983). This official version, still current, has been taken over willy-nilly by many Western specialists without questioning its actual relevance.

Another general claim is that the Bektashis preserved many traits of oppositional movements and heretical groups, and shaped them into a synthesis during times of a mutual penetration of Turkic and Byzantine cultural traits. There is clear evidence for the participation of Hadji Bektash himself and his adherents in the Turcoman uprisings against Seljuk rule in 1239–1240, the so-called Babaî revolt (Koprulu 1993:76–77). However, there remains probably very little resemblance between the Turkic beliefs of Hadji Bektash’s time in the thirteenth century and the heterodox but sophisticated doctrines taught at the turn of sixteenth century when the Bektashis were organized as an established order of dervishes.

While the complexities of the Bektashi past may never be known precisely, specialist historians appear to agree that they were often tribal or nomadic communities who inhabited that uneasy geographical region between the central power of the Ottomans, on the one hand, and the gradually more orthodox Safavid Iran on the other. While they were exposed to many different currents of Islamic thought, one of the most effective was a form of revolutionary mystical leadership espoused by Iranian Shiism, which gave Kizilbash-Bektashism after this period a distinctive Shiite character. This brought the

---

chose the Bektashi interpretation of Islam. A tenet of Bulgarian scholarship, in particular, has for a long time been the Bogomil hypothesis (see Gramatikova 2001), which associated the Bektashi ethnically with the Bulgarian component and religiously with the Christian Bogomil heresy, thus presenting them as descendants of either Old Bulgarians or Islamicized Christians.

Kizilbash into violent conflict with the Ottoman state, itself ever more inclined towards Sunnism (Kehl-Bodrogi 1988:42–47). It led to widespread, brutal massacres and forced conversion, a persecution that reached its peak during the time of Sultan Selim I (1512–1520). As a result of mass deportations during this time from Anatolia to the European provinces, the Kizilbash and other heretics integrated into the Bektashi order must have laid the ground for the presence of Shiite and heterodox elements in south-east Europe.

Parallel to the tumultuous Kizilbash developments in the early sixteenth century taking place under the explicit patronage of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512), a reforming trend was introduced with the appointment of a dervish known as Balim Sultan (1473–1516) to the headship of the order of Bektashis. Formerly leader of an important Bektashi foundation in Dimetoka near Edirne in Thrace, he took up his post at the Bektashi headquarters of Hacibekdash Village in Anatolia around the year 1501, taking firm control and introducing a large degree of uniformity, which earned him to be revered as the order's second founding saint. Shortly thereafter, the Bektashis astonishingly established themselves as one of the most influential dervish orders during the Ottoman period from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

As colonizers charged with the Turkicization and Islamicization of countries conquered by the first Ottoman sultans (Melikoff 1992:115–137), the Bektashis were not only an instrument of the Ottoman propaganda in these countries, but also enjoyed some political importance in the Ottoman Empire, even imposing themselves on certain weak or mystically inclined sultans, especially when the Bektashis were closely connected with the Janissary troops, the instrument of Ottoman military power. It is considered that the Bektashis constantly encouraged and dominated the Janissaries by traditionally providing their religious guides. This elective affinity between the two groups has been attributed both to the supposed Christian substratum of Bektashism and to the widespread and long-lasting Ottoman practice of conscripting Christian youths

into the Janissary Corps. To what degree, however, the rise of the Bektashi order can be attributed to its links with the Janissaries is a matter still open for investigation, as disputes rage among specialists about the role of Bektashis in the formation of Janissaries as an elite army.

When after repeated revolts and rebellions the Janissary troops were finally dismantled in 1826, with resisting forces being massacred, the Bektashis as well became subject to state suppression and had to move to the margins of the Empire. A hundred years later, in the modern Turkey after World War I, the Bektashi order again suffered state prosecution, until 1925 when it was officially abolished together with the other dervish orders in the newly founded Turkish Republic. These trials and tribulations allowed Bektashism to develop again a non-conformist and antinomian stance, to the point of being often depicted, despite its deep mystical roots, as a progressive current within Islam, close to Westernizing and modernizing trends.

In a very broad generalization, it has been argued that a “historical bipartition” developed between the Bektashis who were traditionally urbanized and educated and the Alevis who lived in villages, the former having spread in the Balkans and the latter remaining in the Anatolian countryside (Melikoff 2001:37–44). Bektashism has therefore often been considered as a kind of “purified” Islam, what an older generation of social anthropologists might have termed the “great tradition” of the urban and organized Bektashi order against the “little tradition” of the rural and less-educated Alevi or Kizilbash. Insisting, however, that modern Alevi and Bektashi groups have much more in common than they have differences, the Alevis themselves will often talk about the “Alevi-Bektashi” creed, culture, or traditions.

In the persecution climate during Ottoman-Safavid wars in the sixteenth century, the isolated Kizilbash-Alevis in rural Anatolia developed traditions, practices, and doctrines that by the early seventeenth century marked them as closed, autonomous religious communities, opposed to all forms of external religion (Kehl-Bodrogi 1988:38–47).



Alevism used to be and to some extent still continues to carry a social stigma in contemporary Turkey, and many Alevis have attempted to hide their backgrounds once they had moved to large cities.

The relationship with the Sunni majority remains one of mutual suspicion and prejudice, dating back to the Ottoman period. Sunnis have accused Alevis of heresy, heterodoxy, rebellion, betrayal and immorality. Alevis, on the other hand, view themselves as the true preservers of authentic Turkish culture, religion, and language. More importantly, Alevism is claimed to be able to adapt to modernity because it is flexible and tolerant, possessing a natural sense of equality and justice. It is much more suitable for the modern world than Sunnism, it is said, for it includes traits supposedly suppressed by the latter, which is therefore not true Islam but an aberration that opposes free and independent thought by its strict legalism, which is seen as reactionary, bigoted, fanatic, intolerant, domineering, and antidemocratic.

More importantly, in the last three decades one has witnessed in Turkey what has been described as an Alevi cultural revival, which has led to the issue of Bektashi or Alevi heterodoxy becoming heatedly politicized and ethnicized (Kehl-Bodrogi 1992; Vorhoff 1995; Shankland 2003; Massicard 2005). Spearheaded by the new, educated Alevi elite, Alevi cultural associations are established, foundations and trusts organized, old Bektashi convents reopened, saints' tombs rebuilt, rituals restored and re-invented. The revival places emphasis on Alevism as a cultural and religious heritage and aims to reconstruct Alevi culture, community, and identity, but also to articulate Alevi collective interests towards the modern state and demand equality with the Sunni majority. In an ongoing process of negotiation where leaders representing different traditions and trends participate, many intellectuals have made contributions towards a systematization of Alevi beliefs, and a flood of new books and journals reflects the efforts to reinvent Alevism.

Certain actors interpret Alevism as the specifically Turkish form of Islam, that is, the "true" Islam rid of Arab influences. Alevism,

according to them, is a Turkish-Anatolian religion combining Islam with elements of Turkish culture. An ethnic dimension is often emphasized, making Alevism into a support for Turkish identity or portraying it as an authentic Kurdish phenomenon. More generally, this view sees Alevism as the authentic expression of an Anatolian culture and civilization, and in contrast to a specific Turkish nationalism sets up an Anatolian cultural mosaic, which includes many other groups allied with the Alevis against Ottoman oppression.

While many have remained Kemalist and continued to hope that the state will officially legitimize the Bektashi order, the new generation has shown a strong tendency to think of Alevism as a political opposition movement rather than a religious tradition. Partly due to the severe repression of the left and partly as a response to the imposition of a conservative brand of Sunni Islam by the state, the young generation joined extreme leftist parties. Working for a radical restructuring of society, they viewed all “reactionary” elements which tried to assimilate them into mainstream Sunni life as enemies, reinterpreting both historical opposition to Sunnism in terms of class struggle and Alevism in a socialist and Marxist idiom that highlighted Bektashi ideals of equality and traditions of revolt and opposition to the state (Vorhoff 1995). They viewed their religion as a positive political and social revolutionary ideology fighting against oppression and evil on behalf of the poor and marginalized sectors of society. They thus defined Alevism in the tradition of democracy or as a culture of rebellion, based on the Kizilbash revolts under Ottoman Empire or on the massive Alevi engagement to the left in contemporary Turkey. Considering that Ali was the defender of the poor and oppressed, and that Hassan and Hussein were the first martyrs in the cause of the dispossessed, they presented Alevism as having always led the fight for liberation against all tyranny, while reactionary Sunnism served the rich and powerful dominant elites.

Still, most Alevis follow the Kemalist secularist ideology, and as Alevism becomes more secular, the conception of God becomes

almost entirely internalized and conflated with the person in worldly life (Shankland 2003). Thus, the Sufi cry of ecstasy conflating God and the self, regarded as the pinnacle of profound understanding and often associated with a mass of complicated symbolism and secret doctrine, becomes completely routinized, a casual but assertive claim to place the individual and their desires at the centre of the universe. This shift can lead to a profoundly peaceful humanism, and frequently does. It may also lead to a notable phenomenon whereby individuals, or sometimes whole Alevi associations, interpret Alevism as an international culture. They stress only the liberal and humanistic values of Alevism as a world-view, downplaying its religious connotations. In this context they may deny that Alevism is Islamic, and claim that its origins lie in pre-Islamic religious systems, stressing their links to similar groups, all assumed to be fragments of an original community. For these people, being a Alevi is extended to mean something that is common to all humanity, not restricted to a chosen group of believers, and which, in effect, has nothing to do with religion.

On the other side, during the later developments of Bektashism under the Ottoman Empire Albania often served as a kind of exile for the adherents of the Bektashi order, and there is general agreement that after their first noticeable presence in that country in the second half of seventeenth century, Bektashism gradually became more and more deeply rooted in Albania during the end of nineteenth century. Besides the fact that the Bektashis in Albania were spared the suppression that the order had to face in Anatolia and other core areas of the Ottoman Empire after 1826, a reason for its growth in that country may be the specific Albanian religious climate (see Doja 2000b), on which account the establishment of Bektashism in Albania has attracted special attention as a religion supposed to have incorporated many archaic traits and to have developed in Albania an independent character, something which serves as another paradigmatic example of the forces of cultural inertness and political resistance (Kressing 2002). Because of its

both pantheistic and unorthodox character, it has often been assumed that the acceptance of Bektashism in Albania was largely facilitated by the fact that Bektashi syncretism already combined pre-Islamic and Shiite elements with Christian elements.

When Bektashism established itself in Albania, the argument goes that these elements must have been quickly replaced by Albanian popular traditions. Arguably Bektashism came to be perceived as the purest expression of Albanian religiosity and the conservatory of Albanian traditions, to the point of being considered as the only truly national religion, and it is no surprise if Bektashism might have played an important role in the national awakening of Albania in the second half of the nineteenth century. Specialists speak of the “solidification” of a properly Albanian Bektashism in the western confines of Ottoman Empire, with elements of Albanian nationalism being integrated into Bektashi doctrine, especially in the southern parts of the country where most of the Bektashi lodges were situated (Popovic and Veinstein 1996:470).

Whether religious politics was instrumental in mobilizing ideological myths or actual action on the eve of the Albanian independence, the Bektashis were numerically important and politically influential, and Albanian Bektashi dervishes were frequently found in convents outside their own country. Many high Bektashi dignitaries, including sometimes even the supreme leader of the central institution, are often thought to be of Albanian origin. When Turkey decreed the definitive abolition of all the mystical orders in 1925, the Bektashi general headquarters once again took refuge in Albania. At any case it became quite clear that a decisive national Albanian character of the order was further fostered in the course of the twentieth century, when Bektashism became officially recognized by the Albanian state as the fourth legal denominational congregation of the country.

*Nonconformist Groupings and Liberation Theology*

The Bektashis were one of the many bands of believers seeking to achieve the goal of most Sufis, that is, mystic union with God. When mystical union with God was not quite the goal sought, it was the cult of the miracle-working saints, living or dead, through worship of their tombs, which prevailed in the religious fervour of these heretical and heterodox groupings of dervish religiosity. In these conditions, the intensity of religious life prevailed over its extension, and salvation became a personal affair rather than a relationship with some grace-dispensing agency. Participation in the spiritual community comforted the individual need to oppose or transcend society, raising one temporarily into timeless supernatural experience. Heterodox or heretical movements and mystical orders like Bektashism embodied in themselves the whole *mysterium fascinans* of the age, the revealed, esoteric, mystical, and emotional religion. Their function was to mediate the inner aspect of religious experience.

Regarding their organization, broadly speaking and aside from the peculiarities that may be accounted for by the political and economic systems of the countries in which they spread, the initial structures specific to their communities are suggestive of the early Christian groups of the first centuries, as related in the Acts of Apostles and the Epistles of St Paul. Early Sufi and Bektashi groups were linked by enthusiasm, common devotions, and methods of spiritual discipline, with the aim of stripping the soul and eliminating the self to attain a vision of divine reality. They were therefore integrated by spirit and aim rather than by any formal organization, and were in fact very loose organizations, more or less anarchical, closed, and secret groups or circles of initiates who showed no interest in sharing any collective discipline or dogma. In the early stages of the Sufi movements, until about the thirteenth century, the master is not mentioned at all (Trimingham 1971:167), even though the respect for the spiritual freedom of each member neces-

sitated regulations for the common life. The idea of a spiritual community was formed in such groups as a basis for their common life, and the master remained essentially a guide in spiritual matters, but not an autocrat of a convent, allegedly acting as an intermediary between the believers and God.

Hadji Bektash himself, for instance, led a life of a wandering hermit during most of his life and did not seem to have been a prominent character in religious matters. He did not even seek to found any order or to have disciples during his life (Melikoff 1998). He remained the eponym of an order he did not found himself, and was quite unconscious of the impact he was going to have, his success being achieved after his death and in spite of himself. Although Bektashism had spread over a wide area and gained many adherents, it is considered that “before 1500 both the order and its teachings developed in a random fashion.” In addition, specialists are led to consider that “this vagueness of belief was paralleled by lack of uniformity in their organization,” even though they normally attribute this character to the supposed Bektashi all-encompassing syncretism and the “readiness to incorporate a wide range of beliefs and practices, which made it difficult to define precisely what the order stood for” (Norton 2001:171).

My position, following innovative approaches within the field regarding early Sufism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Trimingham 1971; Karamustafa 1994), is rather to consider Bektashism first as a reaction against the external rationalization of religion in law and systematic theology. Essentially, like other early Sufi groupings, in its earlier developments during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Bektashism corresponded to the sphere of religious experience which developed from the common experience of both spiritual knowledge and suffering, while running parallel and often in opposition to the orthodox institutions and the mainstream of Islamic consciousness derived from prophetic revelation.

Making deliberate use of altered states of consciousness, such as ecstatic dance (*sema*) and recitation (*zikr*), which are still a common

feature of Bektashi practices, Bektashism must have aimed first at spiritual freedom whereby intrinsic and intuitive human spiritual senses would be allowed full scope, over and against instituted religion as based on authority and legalistic morality. It must have been an assertion of a person's right to pursue a life of contemplation, seeking contact with the ultimate source of being and reality. In reaction to the expression of religion as a communitarian matter, Bektashism was a subjective expression of personal religion, directed at an individual and direct experience of the presence of God. Finding inspiration in interpretations revealing the "inner meaning" behind the literal sense of sacred texts, the craving for spiritual satisfaction led these early Sufi Bektashis into a non-conformist religious experience where there was no room for a clear-cut separation between humans and the divinity.

Legalistic orthodox religion fulfilled a social far more than a spiritual function and had little to offer to human spiritual needs, being not concerned with the exercise of a pastoral office and having neither the means nor the agencies for emotional outlet and few for free intercession. In Sunnism, like other formal religious prescriptions, the commandments and rules regarding disciplinary practices, such as praying, fasting, forbidden food and other austerities belong to the Law which the followers are forced to obey by complying with formalities and dogmas. In Bektashism, like other early dervish groups, the initial dogged individualism was reinforced by initiation into a claimed higher degree of knowledge and awareness, for a follower no longer to be bound by the formalistic austere demands and prohibitions of the Islamic faith comprehended within the orthodox, codified, and systematic theology such as propounded by the legalist Sunni dogma.

The claim of having learned and understood the essence and core of religion led Bektashis to personal interpretations of the doctrines and traditions. Claiming to be enlightened enough to follow the Way by obeying the voice of conscience they could thereby proceed alone by carrying out the religious commandment with a tendency to reduce salvation and rebirth to a purely internal oper-

ation, to the point of denying the need for rituals. They actually rejected any external display or collective worship for their religion, thus repudiating especially the external forms of Islam and its five pillars. For Bektashis, worship is a secret affair, peculiar to initiates who are taught that inner purity and sincerity are more important than outward ablution and ritual. They firmly believe that it is essential not to unveil the secret, that they are responsible to God and not to their other fellow humans, that sin involves doing things surreptitiously rather than in public, and so on. The premise that underlies the distinctive character of the Bektashis is the purification of the human heart and spirit, which is the fundamental purpose of all religious rites. They claim that this purified state is attainable without following either the Sunni or the Shiite forms of worship.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Bektashis are systematically criticized for both their fanaticism and their liberalism, insofar as their heterodoxy resided in the non-observance of canonical rituals. They do not practice at set times the five daily prayers (*namaz*) or the ritual ablutions (*abdes*), nor do they observe the fast of Ramadan or believe in the necessity of pilgrimage to Mecca. They interpret the Koran in an esoteric, allegoric, and symbolic rather than literal manner and appeal to Koranic authority rather less than do most other dervish groups. Appropriate verses are read at weddings and funerals, but otherwise they are happier to listen to the verses of their poets conveying their own responses to the sacred texts. On a more formal level, they are criticized for their tolerance of alcoholic beverages and the presence of women during ceremonies, as well as for indulging in orgies or sexual licenses and of all the slanders to which eccentrics of all sorts have been victims during the centuries (Müller 1967).

In the face of economic, social and ideological upheavals, the most radical mystics always adopted attitudes cultivating distance not simply from legalist religion but from mainstream society as well. Their watchword was the desire to be outsiders in a world they claimed to be corrupt and led astray by bad guides. Mystics



of this sort were not simply opponents of the ruling classes, they were intent on going against social norms as well. Alternatively, whenever faced with drastic social change, people will systematically turn from the worship of a transcendental, orthodox God towards an internalized sense of spiritual self that is far less reliant upon the formalized framework of traditional religious ritual such as that exemplified by legalist Sunni Islam. This is, of course, an extremely abrupt summary of a particular inclination that appears to have been active among the Bektashis and was especially emphasized in the course of history each time they were subjected to political state oppression.

This must have happened specifically in the early phase of Bektashism in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, during the Ottoman-Safavid wars in the first half of sixteenth century, after the suppression of Janissary troops in the first half of nineteenth century, or after the abolition of the dervish orders in the first half of the twentieth century (Doja 2006a). It is this emphasis that has made it possible for the Bektashis in Anatolia to achieve a close sense of identity successively with the Young Turk movement, with the Albanian national awakening in the second half of nineteenth century (Doja 2006b), and with early Turkish nationalism in the first quarter of twentieth century. The same emphasis must have also interacted with more recent nationalist ideals and left-wing “progressive” political philosophy, which are even more unstable, as has been often the case with the Alevi revival in contemporary Turkey, or with the “democratic” processes of post-communist transformations in contemporary Albania.

Among groups which possess a radicalized interpretation of the social world, one that relies upon, and feeds off, the communist ideal of the inherently illegitimate state, this emphasis may become less a route to toleration than one of hardened bitterness over the perceived lack of respect that is paid to the person in modern society. Indeed, if a group or organisation both lose faith in the state and respect for divine authority, they may turn more easily to

imposing their ritual practices and anti-authoritarian ideas into the service of a revolutionary ideology. Viewed in this light, the religious experience of the Bektashis have presented recognizable characteristics of a liberation theology, while the structure of their groups corresponded more or less to the type of religious organization conventionally known as charismatic groups.

### *Master and Disciple*

One of the functions of religion as a cultural system is to serve as a mediating representation between powerless earthly creatures and an all-powerful God located in heaven. Mediation may make it possible for the heavenly divinity to intercede on behalf of humans on earth. The assumption here is that different covenantal structures of divine mediation must correspond to specific stages in the development of Bektashism and Sufism. The following assumption is that it is possible to gain a different meaning if a mediating hierarchy is to be found in the conceptualization of the divinity or in the organization of the worldly human society.

The manuals produced as guides for initiation may be somehow useful for elucidating the theological philosophy and the social experience of Bektashi religiosity. Some sections in the manuals are particularly significant in their emphasis on a restricted hierarchy, from which it could be clearly inferred how questions of religious hierarchy and authority are dealt with. They successively describe the ranks of leader, teacher or guide (*pir*, *murshid* and *rehber*), and the different ranks of followers (*talib* and *murid*), which resemble each other closely with the importance of submitting to a master being stressed throughout (Kehl-Bodrogi 1988:104–12).

Bektashi discourses, as other Sufi apologetics, assert that their Islam is more than religion and articulate its techniques and master-disciple relations as reflections of those of God to humans. However, a critical examination of this relationship, conceptualized externally in terms of the societal, personal, and ritual meanings it presumes,

can be an outstanding opportunity for approaching religious conceptions in their ideological and political implications. Indeed, if a difference is claimed in the case of Bektashism which for the disciple must lay in the accessible presence of the master as the intermediary between humans and God, while in the case of orthodox Islam or Christianity the relationship is claimed to be inaccessible and no intermediary is available, these assertions are commonly met with a more social or political ontology.

Such assertive claims are nevertheless taken for granted and never questioned even in the most sophisticated analyses. A case in point is Frances Trix's sociolinguistic study of the meanings of, and the means for transmitting, Islamic spirituality and worldview, from the master and spiritual guide (*murshid*) to his follower, aspirant and disciple (*talib*) (Trix 1993). I have argued elsewhere that in spite of her sophisticated conceptual framework and methodology, Frances Trix, "going native" in the very conditions of her specifically lasting and "faithful" experience as a Bektashi *talib* herself, could not but view the relationship in this way (Doja 2004). The learning framework and the position of disciple offered her a vague yet all-encompassing scheme in which every narrative and adage must be placed according to theological explanations. In addition, the teaching process Trix described was not an over-common occurrence in daily life but rather part of those rare instances when one is faced publicly to produce the type of intellectual explanation which daily life does not normally call for.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, this is nothing other than what Maurice Bloch calls the expansion of ideology into something which misleadingly looks like an interpretation of the world (Bloch 1985).

Normally, Sufi and Bektashi groups are inspired by the ideal of a community of the spiritually pure who are gifted with the graces and powers that knowledge is supposed to procure, and who are

---

<sup>3</sup> The same Albanian Islamic master teaching "spiritual discourse" to anthropologist Frances Trix, has published a number of intellectual speculations on

called upon to dispense these benefits around them. A dividing line splits followers into two classes, depending on whether they are capable or worthy of receiving some or all of the gifts of grace and spirit, some having acquired them and possessing them fully, while others aspire to partake of them, or are just at the beginning.

Since all the stipulated moral prescriptions could not be observed literally and to the same extent by all, early Sufi and Bektashi groups only demanded that the best of the followers be strict in their practices. They were obliged, therefore, to resort to a sort of dual ethics, prescribing two distinct systems of observances and rules of conduct. A more liberal set of rules was conceded to the weakest and most imperfect, the seekers or followers, designated as disciples (*murids* or *talibs*). Another, much stricter code, was reserved for the initiated elite, also known as the perfects or saints (*eren* or *të mbërrimët*), who belonged to the superior class of the elect few. Each of the religious groups, and each of the communities

---

Bektashism (Rexhebi 1970), which have also inspired a number of other area specialists (Clayer 1990, 2002). But whatever such patented super-informants like Baba Rexhebi may tell us, we must not lose sight of the fact that what we are observing is exactly what they can manage to do with their ideological schemes when their prestige is at stake. This also clarifies the apparent elective affinity between anthropologists and informants who are themselves somehow marginal to the culture that is being studied, even though, or perhaps because, they are in a representative position. One thinks, for example, of Marcel Griaule's or Victor Turner's famous accounts of their long exegetical sessions with Ogotemmeli and Muchona respectively (Griaule 1948; Turner 1967). The marginal figure is more likely to ponder on what is going on and why, precisely because his or her partial detachment from the centre of things. This is, if not a problem, at least gives pause for thought. What is created in this kind of encounter is a kind of intermediate ground between cultures, "the beginnings of a hybrid, cross-cultural object or product," a "liminal world," as Paul Rabinow (1977:153) describes it in his own account of fieldwork. If there is systematically a general concern to provide the anthropologist an official or respectable version of the facts, this undoubtedly reveals something of the nature of cultural self-awareness as well as of the politics of fieldwork.

of which they were composed, contained members of both sorts, more or less clearly grouped into two classes, the larger of the two, the followers, auditors or adepts (*muhibs*), being organized by and subordinated to the other, the elected few, perfects and fathers (*dervishes*). Thus, at the top there were the saints, almost sacred; below them were the sinners, or at the least, the profane, the lay people still under the sway of the world and its temptations.

The opposition between the elect and the followers is akin to those between the elder and the younger, the strong and the weak, the perfect and the imperfect, the spiritually accomplished and the novices, the master and the disciple. However, the distance between the two groups should not be exaggerated, at least for the beginnings of Bektashism in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries or for the later, difficult periods of recurring persecution. Aside from the fact that followers and seekers were supposed to have received both the faith and knowledge when they entered the religion, they were acknowledged as true believers and were an integral part of the Bektashi order on a par with the elect. The disciples became adepts, as the "followers" became "believers," and the latter became "perfect" dervishes after given proof of their strict observance and wisdom.

According to Sufi Bektashi conceptions, God is supposed to be present in everyone and the potential for perfection is present in every human being, insofar as for all Reality (*hakikat*) there is no existence but in the Truth (*hakikat*), which is in fact God (*al-Hakk*). In the theory of the "oneness of being,"<sup>4</sup> it is required of individuals to become aware of their state as ultimately emanated, and to understand the community of their essence with the whole of creation. They may thereafter make their way back towards their creator, towards their origins, towards the state of ultimate perfection and truth. God may be approached through the improvement

---

<sup>4</sup> Experienced as one Reality, for the Muslim mystic this is the world's foundation and its subsistence. Therefore everything in the world is nothing other than God, and the created world is only an appearance. This view of the created world

of oneself. God is incarnated in humans when they have reached the highest stages of perfection, which is obtained only by the sacrifice of self, in order to better free one's body and to be integrated into the divinity or rather to integrate divinity into the self.

It is through the elect, however, thanks to the contacts and concrete ties created and maintained with them through the mediation of spiritual knowledge (*marifet*), that seekers and followers formed and strengthened the bonds that attached them to the body of their religion, while they at the same time acquired merits and edified themselves. In addition, for the masters of the Bektashi Way, like in early Sufism, the mystical tendency became highly dangerous as an individual experience, since there can be mystic Ways, the Sufi argument goes, to other gods than God. Hence the necessity of guidance under an experienced director was insisted on. In order to go through the gateways of spiritual growth, and to experience the divine Reality and ultimate Truth and penetrate to their inner significance, one needed a guide, a spiritual master (Birge 1937:102–3).

In most Bektashi narratives, indeed, the point is clearly made that “the *murshid* is the way through which the student reaches God” (Trix 1993:123). This is simply because the master has already acquired the perfection stage of “the perfect human being” (*insan-i kamil*) (Birge 1937:96–97). For Bektashis, if each human being is a mosque, each human face is the face of perfection (*vech-i kamil*) of one's master. In him the outer signs of perfection are matched by inner perfection, and the dual, inseparable personality

---

seems to have encouraged a quest for “hidden” connotations that was joined with an emphasis on the mystic pantheism of the oneness of being (*vahdet-i vucud*). As one of the most illuminating expressions of Muslim heterodox mysticism, the theory professed that ultimate truth and perfection can lie only in a pantheistic synthesis. Especially the existential monism of the theory, to the extent that there is no radical distinction between the Creator and his Creation and that everything exists within a single reality, earned Sufism the charge of having exchanged monotheism for pantheism, drawing strong condemnations from the orthodox doctors of religion.

of Muhammad and Ali was believed by the Bektashis to be represented on earth by every master, who is to the follower what the Prophet is to the community of Muslims. For this reason, the follower is taught to owe a greater allegiance to his master than to his own parents, and the Bektashis equal ritual prayer (*namaz*) with paying visits to one's master (Norris 1993:97), who was thereby entitled to great veneration.

Therefore, to the extent of his status of perfection, the master is supposed to have already acquired the capacity to communicate directly with God, which the disciple still lacks. God could respond to the master if called upon, but not yet to the disciple. To be sure, the disciple is a "faithful," but he or she is still a follower and a seeker, encouraged to pass through the gateways of ultimate truth-reality, and in his or her turn, to become perfect and reach his or her own union with God.

Historically, the first meaning of "faith" was a virtue of loyalty. In the relation to divinity as well, as I have shown elsewhere (Doja 2000a), faith always implied a loyalty to the conventions and fidelity to commitments. In this case, faith was not a belief in a theological *credo*, but the confidence that the faithful showed to the power of god. It was a kind of initial contract, where a distinction can always be made between the confidence that humans place to the "credit" of gods and the favours that gods are supposed to send to humans. These are the two movements in opposite directions which define two complementary fields of exchange. Their automatism is thus less magical than legal, because they imply constraints like a pact, at least like that type of implicit pact that Marcel Mauss studied in his essay on *The Gift* as "the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies" (Mauss 1950).

The inclusion of faith within the field of discourse and exchange makes it possible to grasp that the act of faith always encompasses a confidence in a reward. To believe is to engage his or her own confidence in an act of faith expressed towards a god, but on the provision of a return. It is a kind of concrete stake and security

token, which also engages personal feelings. It is this concept which is then invested with a mental attitude and an “interior state,” in Evans-Pritchard’s terms (Evans-Pritchard 1965), that is, the confidence which belongs to oneself and which one offers up to a high and powerful god. It is this relation that constitutes a bond of faithfulness, which is necessarily accompanied by an act of confidence, with the certainty to receive a return in the form of a favour awarded in the form of divine inspirations.

Now for the Bektashis, the experience of spiritual learning is achieved by means of the master as a communication process with the spiritual knowledge. Had this process led to the possession of the mystical gnosis (*marifet*), as is normally expected to result in the very “faithful” sense from the internalizing experience as an “act of faith,” the novice would be sanctified as a potential saint, having achieved a mystic union with God. But the union, involving divine inspiration, is not possible without progressive communication through different manifestations of divinity, split into a series of hierarchical emanations. The most accessible of these is, in fact, none other than one’s own master, who appears to be, not so much a simple intermediary between humans and God, but rather God himself in a different guise.

Of course, in Bektashi practice, neither religious leaders nor their followers justify their behaviour by direct reference to their sacred books or manuals nor, indeed, is there ever any mention that there are categories outlined theoretically which must be found in the local community. Even though the Bektashi masters appear regularly to possess some kind of manual, they never bring it into religious ceremonies. They rather absorb aspects of Bektashi religious philosophy that they find interesting in their own time and recount them in the course of commentaries, as they do with song, poetry, and narrative in the mode of parable. The great weight of the inculcation, teaching and perpetuation of Bektashi religious thought lies almost exclusively with the local religious leaders themselves and the oral tradition that supports them. To illustrate, a well-known



narrative is frequently told where the disciple looking for his master went to his house, looked for him down twisting streets, then inside another house, and finally up on the flat roof. When he did not see him on the roof either, he jumped off, and his master caught him in his arms (Trix 1993: 158).

Each practicing leader has an oral account which explains his past, within which is often a mention of his spiritual ancestors and teachers attending the lodge of Hadji Bektash and also of his own ability to perform miracles. The immediate reason for the religious leaders' accepted authority is that they are accepted as having been sanctioned by Hadji Bektash and his successors. These claims are supported by myths and, from a wider perspective, are embodied within a cosmology which assumes that some may be closer to God than others. They express this by saying that they are people of "charisma" (*keramet*), which is best understood in this context as "the ability, given by God, to perform miracles." Independently of any other consideration, "charisma" is a mark of God's favour and places the leaders in the rank of ultimate "truth-reality" (*hakikat*), where one is in contact with God, at liberty to perform miracles and control the material world.

On a more technical level, as in Sufism generally, the claims are supported by explicit hierarchical series or chains of initiation (*silsila*) that connect the masters ultimately to God. In the developed series the chain of authority includes an unbroken historical line of masters and disciples, through which they are connected to the founder of the order, their patron saint Hadji Bektash. This unbroken chain of spiritual revelation and power continues the link that leads from the order's founder himself to earlier saints, to the Imams, to Hussein, whose master was Ali, whose master was the Prophet Muhammad, whose master was the Angel Gabriel, and which thus ends in God. If God's manifestation (*mazhar*) is Ali, who shows himself under various forms, and if Ali is the source of the divine light, Bektashi poetry and narrative offer numerous witnesses to the belief that Ali was fused with the various Prophets, that he appeared

under the aspect of the Twelve Imams and that he showed himself as Hadji Bektash, who “carried the sign of Ali in the palm of his hand.” In other words, Hadji Bektash as well was God in a different guise. Building on this continuity, Bektashi followers come into relation with God through devotion to their personal master.

Clearly, if there are mediators between humans and God, such as the Sufi and Bektashi master (*murshid*), for instance, or a priest or sacrificer, they act as representatives of the secular congregation and place themselves on a higher plane than the latter but in a position of inferiority with respect to the deity. However, the mediational structure may also be of another type, and claim to be the negation of hierarchy of any sort. In this model, the initiative is entirely in the hands of the divinity, which may manifest itself in a number of hierarchized emanations but without any mediation, by dispensing the gifts of its grace directly to the faithful, with believers receiving immediate inspiration. Charisma, divine grace, and spiritual knowledge touch them without the help of any intermediary, and is in no way affected by the degree of effectiveness of any ritual or specific expertise performed or controlled by a mediating priest or master.

Following a structural hypothesis suggested by Edmund Leach (1972), I have argued elsewhere that a crucial factor for understanding the communication between humans and God lies in the fact that the conceptualization of a hierarchical model of religious mediation corresponds to the dogma of orthodox faiths, while the conceptualization of a model in which all hierarchies are denied, in its real embodiments, is closely linked to millenarian and mystical beliefs and to the development of heresies and heterodoxies (Doja 2000a), such as those related to Bektashism. The former model may well support an established, hierarchical power, whereas the latter corresponds to an oppressed or deprived minority, seeking justification for its revolt against the established authorities.

According to this model, the establishment of a political hierarchy in a given society goes hand in hand with the introduction of

a unified conception of divinity, that is, a pure monotheism within the theological system. On the other hand, a manifest hierarchical conception of the divinity goes together with egalitarian politics. The conception of a relational equality, derived from the idea that people are equal in their relations with the divinity, is effectively present alongside an ideology of substantial egalitarianism among human beings.

This brings us to our main assumption regarding the character of Bektashism. Insofar as the master is perceived as “God himself in a different guise,” the system of beliefs and practices related to Bektashism is a liberation theology, which makes it possible to meet social, cultural and national demands. In turn, when the master is perceived as a kind of priest, an “intermediary between a disciple and God,” Bektashism becomes an orthodox ideology aiming at the establishment of a political hierarchy.

### *Organizational Transformations*

The normal relationship of a disciple to his or her master has often been described as a spiritual sonship, but the relationship implied by these terms in different stages of development came to be entirely different. In an extended Bektashi adage, it is asserted that a disciple is one who “knows that he or she does not know” (Trix 1993:86). This refers, of course, to more than facts, for when Bektashis in general speak of knowledge, they mean spiritual knowledge, that is, the process of coming closer to God. For the lowly Bektashi disciple, however, what is lacking is a framework for understanding what is going on. In addition, the Bektashi goal for the disciple “to know what one does not know,” also implies, as Trix showed, an acknowledgment that one is unable to predict sequences and find meaning within a new situation.

In other words, to use Goffman’s terms (Goffman 1974), *knowing one’s lack of knowledge* is a sort of suspension of the frame of experience. In the interaction with the master, this lack of a frame of reference, this lack of knowledge, is reflected in features that are often characterized as differential strategies between negative and

positive experiences, in an attempt to both maintain and reduce social distance. Thus, if the Bektashi tradition expects and promotes this suspension of a cognitive framework for the disciple, its purpose should be the actualization of the relationship with his or her master, a kind of “negative experience” allowing the reintegration into a new frame. In Bektashi thinking, the way to achieve the spiritual goal is understood with the help of the master, who serves as “the only way to a reintegration, thus the *knowing of one’s not knowing* cuts one loose and focuses trust on the *murshid*” (Trix 1993:103).

Based on Bektashi beginnings in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the evidence from subsequent times of political oppression, it is generally assumed that the continual guidance of individual disciples has made the masters appear quite naturally as the medium between God and humans. However, the overriding importance of the system of the master-disciple relationship, which became the very foundation of the Sufi orders, is that it implies a shift in morality. The institutionalization of the master-disciple hierarchy brought forth the organization of what cannot be properly organized, that is, personal mystical life and individual creative freedom, which are now fettered and subjected to conformity and collective experience. I believe this process must correspond to the radical change that took place in the Bektashi environment after the organization of the order in the sixteenth century, which may also be discerned to repeat itself each time after recovering from periods of persecution.

In times of consolidation of the order, the masters would deny the right of the individual, not merely to seek a Way by trial and errors but even under any guidance. Thus, the master would become an exclusive mediator, like a priest, who allotted spiritual tasks according to a mechanical ritual process, whereas the initiation of a disciple involved the surrender of his or her will to that of the master. It was the task of the master to judge the personality and capability of his followers, to instruct them in the teachings of the order and at appropriate stages to reveal to them the order’s

secrets. The follower who had received instruction and was deemed worthy by his or her master was initiated into the Bektashi order by means of the special ritual considered to have been part of the organizational reforms introduced by Balim Sultan in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Members of the order could attend the ceremony welcoming a new member up to and including their own rank, but such gatherings were not open to those to whom a master had not yet revealed the secrets relating to that level (Norton 2001:174). Thus, although Bektashism, like Sufism in general, is clearly the embodiment of mystical experience, its distinctive feature has become the insistence that “knowledge” of the divine is only transmitted through the master.

Therefore, the idea of the disciple seeking “to know what one does not know” could be considered, with Trix, as a strong indication that it is only through the master that light and assistance may be gained (Trix 1993:89). Every act of knowing brings forth a world, and all knowing is effective action, since the power of all discourse is the potential to disclose a world. Therefore, in Ricoeur’s terms, “to understand is not to project oneself into the text; it is to receive an enlarged self from the apprehension of proposed worlds which are the genuine object of interpretation” (Ricoeur 1981:182–83). This view squares well with the Bektashi vision of spiritual knowing as the action of drawing closer to God. In Bektashi terms the “enlarged self” includes the spiritual realm.

Through the immersion into mystical Sufi ideas, the image of God that is experienced by the Bektashis through their membership in the ritual activities becomes, from the theological point of view, highly sophisticated. A layered concept of divinity with various levels present God, in effect, not so much as transcendent but rather in a more immanentist fashion than is generally assumed and relies on the Bektashi internalized perception of the divine. Bektashis believe that within all people, their soul is a part of God. They are aware of the Koranic account of creation, but they most frequently describe the way human beings gained a soul as coming

directly from God. Some see the whole of creation, animate and inanimate, as “emanating from a single light identified with God” (Zarcone 2005:41). Others recount that God gave life (*xhan*) to each of the creatures he created on earth, but when he found that he had nothing with which to reflect himself in them, he gave them all a piece of himself (*ruh*), which does not die on the death of the mortal body, but returns to God (Shankland 2003:118).

In the centre of Creation, there seems to be a high-level God who gives humans his Light, whereas a lower level God is emanated from that high-level God and humans in turn are emanations of that emanation. Every human being on earth is an emanation of God on that lower level, which seems to be a kind of astral, shining or spiritual self to whom humans may direct their prayers. This spiritual self improves itself through different incarnations and different social positions, in order to develop into higher degrees of perfection, of which the final stage and supreme goal is to become a “perfect human being” (Cornell 2006), who must achieve union with God, just as did Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad and Ali, among others.

While the higher level is beyond comprehension and reach, and human influence remains doubtful, the ultimate truth of God can be intelligible to humans on earth, which corresponds to the highest degree of initiation in Bektashism. If Aristotle’s most perfect human fulfilment lies not in moral action but in intellectual contemplation, in the context of Bektashism, this would imply that the morally advanced initiate follows the way (*tarikāt*), while the “perfect human being” is united with God through contemplation and thereby has risen beyond the earlier stages to truth-reality (*hakikat*). The main goal of Sufi Bektashi practice is precisely this level of full perfection where humans on earth are completely united with their spiritual self and fully initiated. Therefore, the spiritual self seems to be the voice of conscience guiding humans on their way to perfection and thus allowing them to reach union with God.

Yet, instead of speaking of an “enlarged self,” Bektashis speak of a “loss of self,” of a “death before dying.” The Bektashis may explain the literal meaning by saying that the interrogations they undergo by their masters is parallel to that which they will receive from God after death (Shankland 2003:128). In a language strongly reminiscent of Chapter 3 of St John’s Gospel, they also say that a Bektashi is born first from his mother and then born again into a new world from his master; otherwise he cannot enter the kingdom of the heart (Norton 2001:173). Taken together, this would mean that by dying to this world and its values one may be reborn by entering the kingdom of heart in a mystical union with God, which coincides with a “lost self,” dissolved and annulled in order to reach the “enlarged self” of ultimate unity.

In addition, these seemingly contradictory metaphors should not mask the relevance of Ricoeur’s insistence that any event of interpretation is a hermeneutical appropriation (*Aneignung*), which basically “means to make one’s own what was initially alien” (Ricoeur 1981: 185). What the disciple “makes his or her own” is not something mental, nor it is some design supposedly hidden behind spirituality. Rather, it is the projection of a world, the proposal of a mode of being in the world, which the master discloses by means of non-ostentatious references. Far from the idea that the master, who already masters his own being in the world, projects the *a priori* of his own understanding and injects it into the disciple, the appropriation is rather a process by which the revelation of new modes of being and new forms of life gives the disciple new capacities for knowing. If the reference of discourse is the projection of a spiritual world closer to the world of God, then it is not in the first instance the disciple who is projected in this world. The disciple’s capacity for projection is only broadened by receiving still new modes of being from the master.

Therefore, in the Bektashi vision of spiritual knowing, understood as an action of drawing closer to God, it seems more appropriate to see fundamentally an experience of spiritual growth in which one receives but does not control or direct. The Bektashi expres-

sion of “loss of self” partly reflects the precariousness of trusting the Unknown, as well as the reframing and restructuring of the experience that can ensue. In turn, the master nurtures the relationship with the disciple but always with a clear sense of who has the knowledge. This concept of knowledge becomes actually a prime source of power, whose potential for understanding social relations has been shown by Foucault (1980). Henceforth, subjection to the arbitrary will of the perfects turned the follower into a spiritual slave, not of God, but of a human being, albeit one of God’s elect.

To illustrate, in a well-known narrative the master commanded his disciple to swim across the water with him, holding onto his collar and all the time saying *Pir Hakk!* “patron saint,” here meaning, “the master is the truth.” The disciple, however, revealed his lack of trust in the master by reconsidering halfway across the water and calling out to God instead, at which point he began to drown (Trix 1993:121). In his explanation, the master Baba Rexhebi made it clear for his disciple Frances Trix that it was the master’s place to call out to God for both of them. As for the disciple, his place was to call out only to the master.

For Bektashis, obedience must be total and unquestioning, for failure to obey the master is a failure to keep the oath sworn at initiation. It is certainly not accidental therefore that in the literature it is over and over again reported that one or another unworthy and unscrupulous master will be tempted to exploit his power for personal advantage. Specialists may notice the fact, but they simplistically qualify that when such abuse occurred it was condemned by the Bektashis themselves and outsiders alike (Norton 2001:173). Such occurrences are considered as occasional aberrations from the generally assumed humanistic characteristics of Bektashism, much the same as individual corruption is often assumed to have destroyed the “progressive” role of one or another Bektashi convent, which on occasion turned into a hotbed of conspiracy (Shankland 2003).

Important changes, however, were taking place in the very meaning of Sufi terms as well. By degrees, “awareness,” “contemplation” and “meditation” acquired new meanings, until they came to signify,



in the orders, participation in the being of the object of contemplation (Trimingham 1971:146–48), the union and participation in God developing into that in “Muhammad-Ali,” in Hadji Bektash, and finally in one’s master, living or dead. Hence, the meaning of terminology degenerated from a relationship to God to a relationship to a dead saint or living master, who now became the medium between God and human beings. For example, “mental concentration” (*tawajjuh*) came to mean the spiritual assistance rendered by the saint to his devotees or by the master to his disciple. In this exercise, like the attempt to contact the spirit of the dead saint, the master concentrated upon the disciple, picturing the spinning of a line of linkage between his pineal heart and the heart of the disciple through which power was supposed to flow. At the same time, the disciple concentrated upon becoming a passive vessel for the inflowing power of the master.

In certain instances among the rather few anthropological approaches to Bektashism there is also a focus, even if somewhat timidly, on the sophistication of the Bektashi ideas, which present God as being immanent and transcendent at the same time (Shankland 2003:113–16), but, surprisingly, one has been unable to consider ideological change and authoritarian agency in such matters. Omniscient authority became a vital conception of God among the Bektashis, when religious leaders came to reflect God’s authority on earth. While in heterodox Bektashism the person may find God within themselves, from the orthodox theological point of view this is regarded as unacceptable, because it permits the person to become part of God himself. Therefore, the sense of a transcendental God must necessarily rely upon the creation of social control and order by means of an institutional Bektashism.

The transformation in the conception of God is profoundly intertwined with the mediating function of the religious leaders within the local community, and indeed may be said to be essential to their distinctive means of achieving social control and gaining political power within the traditional setting. In effect, the internal-

ized God is now held to be a reflection of an omnipotent, omniscient, transcendent being. Thus, God may be fearsome, cast supplicants into heaven or to hell at a wish, and sanction particular people through a sign to be leaders to the rest of the community. Indeed, it is the presumption that the religious leaders are in some way qualitatively different from other people by virtue of their closer contact with God which allows them to mediate within the community. That they occupy an intermediary position between God and their followers, that they are God's spokesmen and have the capability to help others contact the Divine is important not simply as a key element in ritual but also becomes the rationale of their authority to mediate in the worldly life.

Religious scholars normally outline three successive stages of development in Sufism, from asceticism (*zuhd*) to mysticism (*tasavvuf*) and then to corporatism (*tarikāt*). Trimingham characterized these three stages, respectively, as the individual's surrendering to God, their surrendering to a rule, and finally their surrendering to a person (Trimingham 1971:102–4). In the first stage, the master and his circle of pupils were frequently itinerant, having minimum regulations for living a common life, leading to the formation of undifferentiated, unspecialized lodges and convents. Methods of contemplation and exercises for the inducement of ecstasy were individualistic and communal. In the second stage, the transmission of a doctrine, a rule and a method corresponded to new types of collectivistic methods for inducing ecstasy. Deriving from professed illuminates, the development of continuative teaching schools of mysticism (*silsila-tarikāt*) disciplined the mystical spirit within organized Sufism and made it conform to the standards of tradition and legalism. In the third stage, the introduction and transmission of allegiance toward the doctrine and the rule formed new foundations for numerous "corporations" or "orders," whose practices were fully incorporated with the saint veneration cult.

Essentially, as in early Sufism, a change took place with the development of *collegium pietatis* into a *collegium initiati* whose

members ascribed themselves to their initiator and his spiritual ancestry, and were prepared to follow his Way and transmit it to future generations (Trimingham 1971:13). The leading master even ceased to teach directly, and delegated authority both to teach and initiate to representatives (*halife*). A special cult therefore surrounded the master, associated with the power supposed to emanate from the saint founder of the order. He became the spiritual heir of the founder, whose qualities and powers become inherent in him upon his succession. The Bektashi life of recollection and meditation now became increasingly associated with a line of ascription, which bestowed the order, its formulae and symbols, as emanating from the master and guiding all disciples along his Way in his name, while the new aura emanated from the master as a protégé (*wali*) of God probably came to imply the belief in his role as a mediator and as an intercessory with God.

The theological rationalization of the necessary relationship between master and disciple was articulated through the historical aspect of the divine hierarchical chain (*silsila*), an idea which was available already in the very theological conceptions of Sufism. On first sight, as Trix showed, divine and historical chains connecting the master to God may be seen as a device to legitimize the place of the master cosmologically (Trix 1993:103). Yet, given the excessive proliferation of orders and their ramifications in almost any local setting,<sup>5</sup> there is good reason to believe that the primary concern of the founders and leaders of an order's branch, while seeking to gain personal ascendancy and protect themselves against accusations of doctrinal irregularities,<sup>6</sup> was that of demonstrating their orthodoxy by showing how their teachings followed those of some famous theologian whose orthodoxy was acknowledged by all. They could then use the authority of this master and all the intermediary links of transmission back to the Caliphs and the Imams for their teaching and practice. Thus, the *silsila* became a

---

<sup>5</sup> This can be shown in the Albanian context (Doja 2006b).

<sup>6</sup> As for instance in the case of the Sanusi (Evans-Pritchard 1949:3).

means to assert the new doctrinal orthodoxy of the order. As new ideas were fostered on eminent Sufis of the past in order to make these ideas respectable, the *silsila* provided a doctrinal as well as a power line leading to the ultimate source of religion.

This process became clearly visible in the history of Bektashism with the advent of Balim Sultan at the head of the order in the early sixteenth century. Out of diverse backgrounds and heterodox tendencies, the nebulous group of Bektashi dervishes gradually developed into an ecclesiastic institution with a highly organized and centralized hierarchy. All available accounts in the literature clearly show that this process was fostered under the specific conditions of Ottoman patronage during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, especially after the order became linked to the powerful military body of the Janissaries (Doja 2006a). A similar process was reiterated in independent Albania in the twentieth century, when Bektashism enjoyed official state recognition (Doja 2006b).

During those periods the organizational system of the Bektashi order was increasingly replaced by another one, more sophisticated and much more institutional, ecclesiastical and hierarchical. Of course, even in the heyday of Bektashism, the distinction between masters and disciples was maintained, but the subordination of the latter to the former was now emphasized. In addition, both categories simply became the last two ranks of a larger hierarchy containing a number of other additional grades, so that the system of two classes was replaced by a much more complex one. The hierarchically lower level, the class of ordinary people and potential followers was categorized as adepts (*muhibs*). The immediately superior class included the elect (*eren* or *të mbërrimët*), righteous and truly initiated. They might become dervishes and later “fathers” (*baba*), hierarchically recognized religious leaders. They must be officially ordained by the “grandfathers” (*dede* or *gjysh*) to whom they paid allegiance. The organization as a whole was now headed by a single leader, the Arch-grandfather (*grand-dede* or *kryegjysh*), who was supported by the leading figures of “grandfathers” known as his caliphs (*halife*).

Even though in contrast with the ulema there were no class distinctions among dervish groups, Bektashi leaders formed an instituted religious class. The officials of the order approached the role of a clergy class similar to that in Sunni Islam or Iranian Shiism, and the Bektashi institutions provided a parochial village religion, with a system of hierarchically affiliated lodges in Anatolia and the Balkans, which in many respects was equivalent to the diocesan church system. Centralization was pushed to the extreme, as the Arch-grandfather, legitimate heir and terrestrial representative of God, came to act as the supreme pontiff of the holy religion of the order. High priest and master of the masters, Grandfather of all Fathers and Grandfathers, he embodied all of the spiritual power and was supposed to lead and govern his followers by ensuring that the dogmas were maintained and transmitted properly, discipline and tradition were respected, and orthodoxy was upheld.

In this way, the Bektashi order developed its final forms of organization and spiritual practices. Innovations were fully integrated and their spirit and aims were stereotyped. No further development was possible and new revelations of mystical insight that could mark a new point of departure in either doctrine or practice were precluded. The authoritarian principle had become the chief feature of the organization, along with the veneration of the master, the supreme inheritor of the divine mystical wisdom, and subjection to his authority was unconditioned. The organization was hierarchical, imposing uniformity, and instituting an elaborate initiation ceremony, non-hereditary offices and disciplinary practices, such as celibacy and other austerities for adepts.

Thus, the development of Bektashism appears to be a perfect illustration of the different phases that all religions experience in their evolution, which corresponds to what Joachim Wach has called the threefold expression of the experience of the sacred (Wach 1958). First of all, doctrinal elaboration, based on prophetism, gradually fashions revelation into an oral message, which receives a written codification, becoming a theology and a dogma.

Next, the worship shapes behaviour into a liturgy, rites, a protocol, whose performance is usually entrusted to ministers of the cult who become its guardians and make sure the rules are not overstepped. Last, in reaction to the anarchist tendencies of frenetic movements or ataraxy, organizational measures are taken by the creation of a hierarchy determining roles, classing believers, and controlling the tradition. Its task is to coordinate and subordinate, canonize and censure, balancing the measures of tradition and innovation, and presiding over the relations between the religious body and its environment. At this point, a religious institution — the “Church” — is established. It takes its place within a religious society by means of which human society asserts both its convictions and its doubts.

With these changes, Bektashi religion, rather than seen as an individual life path, must be regarded as the collective subservience to a road, as a religious order headed by an authoritarian leadership. Bektashism, henceforth viewed as a revealed religion whose doctrines were literally true, became a system of thought which also claimed legal authority. The different elements on which this power was based consisted of the acceptance of the inherent superiority of the Bektashi leaders, the ratification of their decisions at collective rituals, and the inculcation of a sense of appropriate behaviour encapsulated within a necessary moral philosophy. The programme as a whole was supported more immediately through a rich corpus of ritual, narrative, poetry, music, and myth.

A different path is being taken by the Alevi revival in contemporary Turkey, which can be brought in here as a counter-example. Traditional Alevism was based in closed rural communities and consisted of local, largely orally transmitted traditions, while the new Alevism is based in modern urban associations and is experiencing a rapid process of rationalization and scripturalization. This has allowed a redistribution of the knowledge capital to the extent of witnessing the appearance of a new body of exegetes, comparable to a clergy, that is, to use Weberian terms, a group holding the monopoly on the manipulation of the visions of the world. Indeed,

knowledge is not only a symbolic capital but represents a prime essential resource, absolutely sacralized by all identity and political actors of Alevism (Massicard 2005). However, in the course of the movement no consensus has emerged among the actors and entrepreneurs, who are even aware of their dissension concerning the origins and the very nature of Alevism. While all are in search of a relevant knowledge, the accounts are so contradictory that they often do not know which of them to believe. There are so many competing conceptions of what Alevism is or should be that the validity of knowledge can always be called in question. Instead of leading to the unification of the movement, the resource of knowledge thereby contributes to the dispersion of interpretations and the multiplication of conflicts.

The persistence of debates and the not-attribution of a fixed meaning to Alevism cannot be explained by its syncretistic character, but rather by the fact that knowledge has not yet been naturalized and objectified. It can be argued that this state of affairs is due above all to the fact that in the course of the movement no major actor has yet emerged likely to impose a single interpretation of Alevism in politically relevant categories. This is due both to the configuration of actors and to the absence of institutions making it possible to objectify a source of knowledge acceptable and accepted by all. Finally, while seeking to organize themselves for their own protection and survival by building up a religious-cultural association, in the process the Alevis have not yet established a hierarchy of their own, claiming a "true" faith with its own infallible dogmas and doctrines.

### *Instrumental Theology*

One of the cornerstones of political anthropology is that ideology supports the existing power relations within the social community. Indeed, religious leaders are validated in many ways both by Bektashi cosmology in general and by the myths which Bektashi

masters themselves teach. Yet, the two sociological conceptions of the role of religious faith, as supporting either orthodoxy or liberation, are not, by any means, mutually exclusive or essentially contradictory. There are not two kinds of behaviour set once and forever, nor is there a merely "routinization" in the Weberian sense (Weber 1978:246–54), but rather a process of dialectic change and transformation. As political conditions change and the organization of religious structures undergo a number of transformations, the final assumption is that the essential differences between hierarchical and unified types of theology, acting as mediating cultural systems of representation between humans and God, must change and adapt accordingly.

If the character of Bektashism and all Sufi groupings of Islam showed first a cultural system corresponding to the model of religious mediation in which all hierarchies were denied, the subjective and millenarian doctrines of heterodoxy and liberation theology fade into the background at the moment when the members of the previously persecuted religious minority attain a degree of religious and political respectability within society at large. Eventually, chances are that the heirs of mystics and the heterodox promoters of spiritual reform and social movement will turn into followers and faithful defenders of a legitimate authority. They will become the spokespeople for an institutionalized orthodoxy whose support will be sought by the political regime.

The transition from innovation to conservatism in theological conceptions and organizational structures, and the subsequent renewal of innovation, in support of either liberating social and national movements or the re-establishment of a new political power in society, takes on different forms and tones, forming a complex process requiring detailed historical and political analysis of the cultural values and social entities involved. Instrumental transformations of this kind are clearly evidenced by the development of Bektashism down through its history, depending on different political contexts and the course of events, as I have shown for the



classic Ottoman period, for the reformed Ottoman system or for Modern Turkey as well as for Albania from independence to the post-communist era (Doja 2006a, 2006b).

From almost all documentary accounts the important fact can be shown that Bektashi ideas, particularly during the critical periods of the Kizilbash movements in Ottoman Anatolia, the Alevi movements in Modern Turkey or the national movement in Albania, stand forth as extremely heterodox and heretical. In addition, many discursive interactions in Bektashi narratives, poetry, and adages show a coherence of linkages progressing from the outer to inward, that is, as Frances Trix has pointed out (Trix 1993:33–34), from a more Sunni or orthodox Islam to the decidedly mystical conceptions of Sufism, apparently because Sufism or Islamic mysticism could only progress from the outer Sunni form to an inner Sufi meaning. The Bektashi world of discourse can be seen then as a legit-imizing strategy by which a later relationship not sanctioned by Orthodox Islam, seeks legitimacy by being related to one of the basic relationships of Islam. Actually, Sunni Islam is often considered by Bektashis to be a cloak covering the essential Shiite and pantheistic character of the Bektashi faith, and the prevailing opinion assumes that the Bektashis entirely neglected the religious performances required by the Sharia.<sup>7</sup> However, my assumption is that

---

<sup>7</sup> When the Bektashis affirm, for example, the importance of the prescribed Sunni rituals, they understand true rituals (*namaz*) not as mere superficial practice but rather esoteric symbols of justice and goodness, giving emphasis to the sincerity of faith and not to the religion's outward observances. They believe that salvation is found in emulating such perfect models as Ali, Hadji Bektash, and other saints. Everyone must seek "purity of heart" and self-awareness, but piety is measured by lifestyle and not by ritual. Their "three conditions" of speech, action and moral containment (*eline diline beline*) are a succinct statement of an overall orientation that implies very strongly that it is through continual striving for perfection in worldly moral conduct that divine approval will ensue. Again they see the true fast of Ramadan not as the renunciation of material food but rather as a spiritual cleansing of heart from evil, just as they see true pilgrimage not as a physical journey to Mecca but rather as a spiritual journey to the heart. In the same

the part Sunni Islam has played in Bektashi life and thought is more important than it appears.

The fact that the Bektashis were rarely attacked on the grounds of doctrine or innovations is directly related to their association with the Janissaries and the Ottoman authority. In its Ottoman hey-day, when it maintained a strong central organization, Bektashism even claimed to be a Sunni order (Trimingham 1971:80; Norris 1993:89), in spite of its very unorthodox and Shiite tendencies. No wonder therefore that the officials of the order clearly insisted on their loyalty to the Sunna of the Prophet as a necessary stage in their code of discipline. More importantly, as generally within institutional Sufism, from the moment the religious Bektashis leaders felt the need to support their statements with prophetic sayings, they also felt it necessary to express conformity with the Sharia, the revealed Law of orthodox Islam, which coincided with their growing conformity to the legal establishment.

As a result, the mystical content of the order weakened. In fact, every time the order approached the establishment of orthodox political powers, whether in Ottoman as in Modern Turkey or in independent Albania, its hierarchical and centralized organization corresponded to a doctrinal radicalism. It is by no means accidental that the sources emphasize over and over again that a certain eminent Bektashi took the Sharia seriously, a fact that shows that as long as the desire for power of the orthodox postulates its own position as absolute, the educational attitudes of the Bektashis will necessarily follow suit. Order leaders vied with one another in demonstrating their loyalty and subservience to legalistic Islam, and in the process Bektashism was emptied of its essential elements and left with the empty husks of mystical terminology, disciplines, and exercises.

---

way, the order of the hierarchical chains by which the Bektashi conception of divinity is structured parallels once again the outer to inward paradigms leading from the more general Sufi to the more particular Bektashi.

To illustrate, from Albanian Bektashis there are known two seventeenth-century manuscripts written in Turkish, in which it is interesting to notice how the language, in contrast with both earlier and later manuals, is unusually wrapped in the flowery Sunni orthodox vocabulary, often ambiguous, but appearing sometimes as a forced disguise giving all the outward appearances of Sunni orthodoxy (Guidetti 1998:264). More importantly, it can be shown that in these texts there is an effort to comply with the dogma of orthodox Sunni Islam even in respect to features of a categorically Sufi and Shiite nature. I believe the explanation of this attitude is to be found in the context of a more hierarchical development of the Bektashi internal organization, in connection with the historical and political conditions of Albania in the period of the texts' composition. In the seventeenth century, as political power in the Ottoman world was overwhelmingly in the hands of orthodox Muslims, Sunni doctrines were the grounds of legitimacy.

Under these conditions, Bektashi leaders were seeking to subject the mystical element to Islamic standards, to make mysticism innocuous by tolerating many of its outer aspects and forms in return for submission. They increasingly strived to reprimand several colorations of mysticism and fanaticism, while trying to bring followers back to more respect for fundamental Islamic rules. Up to the present day, there are many who vigorously reject any criticism that the order and its doctrines are against the beliefs of Islam, claiming that otherwise Bektashi dervishes would only create prejudices against Islam, by separating themselves from the genuine Islamic teachings.

Religious scholars warn, in particular, against the belief in the incarnation of God in human form, the transcendental annihilation in God, and the cult mysticism where the master is mistaken for God. They try to defend Bektashism from all accusations of heterodoxy or liberalism and consider it identical with the normal understandings of legalist Sunni Islam, stressing its missionary role and the links of transmission, which guarantee against doctrinal deviations of any kind.

A frequent point of friction, as with the case of other dervish sects of extremist Shiite inclinations (Moosa 1988), is the belief in reincarnation (*tenasuh*), the idea of the transmigration of souls, which implied a belief in transformation and the multiplicity of forms, and the doctrine of emanation, which eventually implied the “manifestation” of God in human form (*tecelli*). Specialists may notice that the theory of emanation and the belief in reincarnation are not uniform and not an important theme in Bektashi teaching, and that according to groups and periods, one or another of the strands predominates (Norton 2001:177–78; Zarcone 2005:40). There is general agreement on the conditions under which the animistic belief in the transmigration of souls came about in Turkic mystical and heterodox circles, and also on the character of Alevi-Bektashi groups in which these beliefs became firmly rooted. There is no attempt, however, to understand why in practice some other individuals or groups did not accept or clearly deny such beliefs.

While marginal heterodox and nonconformist influences are admitted, I believe it is the most conservatory trend in the development of Bektashism that claims that these opinions make an amalgam between moderate Bektashi and extreme Shiite views, in order to protect Bektashi religious identity from such distortions that would make it appear hostile to the founder of Islam and to Islam altogether. Actually, in the course of argument, Bektashism is said to have been “misused and misunderstood by destabilizing forces and currents hostile to Islamic society during nineteenth century,” which eventually did cause its disgrace in 1826 (Izeti 2001:53–55). Authoritative assertions come thereby to claim that the Bektashi religious system, as a doctrine and a practice, “is closely connected with the internal development of Islam as a religion” and that its “indisputable ideological and philosophical basis is Islam.” Insofar as it adheres to the two basic Islamic postulates — faith in the unity of Allah and the messenger mission of Muhammad — “we cannot consider its history and philosophy in isolation from Islam” (Gramatikova 2001:600).

After all, indeed, “the Order that had enjoyed the full support of Ottoman power cannot be thought outside the fundamental values of Islam” (Izeti 2001:55). That is why, in Bektashi circles, Hadji Bektash is increasingly presented as a good Muslim, respectful of the prescripts of Islam, and according to a late tradition, even a descendant of the Prophet (Melikoff 2001:121–33). Especially in the period of independent Albania, representatives of the hierarchy of Albanian Bektashi clergy reacted against assertions that tended to consider the order of Bektashis as a doctrine of strong heterodoxy, diverging from orthodox Sunni Islam much more than other Muslim orders. Not surprisingly, they kept up a certain appearance of respect for the law of Sharia, drawing on the traditional tenets that the spiritual way of *tarikāt* must necessarily go through the legal gate of the *shariat*.

The simple traditional Bektashi discussion of the *Sheriat* gateway to religious knowledge takes therefore on a different meaning. Traditionally the Bektashis have built into their religion such flexibility that it is quite acceptable for them to follow the precepts of Sunni Islam when they find it expedient to do so. Such a dual orientation is not just a practical solution to external religious pressure. It also provides a way for the particular and preferred interpretation of Bektashism as an established religion to be linked to the wider body of orthodox history and theology that they regard as being characteristic of Islam. Furthermore, this is more important than it might sound, because it denotes very clearly the way for individuals, or groups, to explore such orthodox practice, not just “if they feel such inclination” in Shankland’s characterization (Shankland 2003:86), but essentially when they see the opportunity for gaining authority and political benefit in doing so.

Birge, for example, witnessed that several evenings as he sat in the guest-room of the head of the Bektashi order in Albania, he saw outside the window a dervish stepping on to the veranda and giving the evening call to prayer. When, in surprise, he asked the reason for this he was told that this was the *shariat* part (Birge 1937:107).

Still today a certain faction of Alevi writers in Turkey will often quote individual Koranic verses as an appeal for authority to support their view on a given topic or to justify a certain Alevi religious tradition, a trend which is becoming increasingly typical for Sufi scholars in their struggle for legitimacy.<sup>8</sup>

With this type of development is also associated a new reverence for the Prophet, which not merely has brought him into the category of wonder-workers at the popular level, but has also led to the doctrine of the pre-existence of Muhammad before creation and to the popular equivalent of the belief in the Spirit of Muhammad as the Logos, guardian, and preserver of the universe. The celebration of the Prophet's birthday seems, at least in part, to have been already a compensation for the suppression of Ali demonstrations after the destruction of Shiite regimes (Trimingham 1971:27).

In contrast with orthodox Islam, one of the central Bektashi beliefs is that Imam Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, was a manifestation of the divinity on earth. A significant part of Bektashi discourses is taken up by the description of how Muhammad was introduced to the original forty followers of Ali, who were learning to perform the ritual from him. They affirm that they were taught how to perform the initiation ritual by Ali, and their slow-stepping "dance of the forty" commemorates the first men and women who gathered around Ali and learnt from him (Melikoff 2001). In many accounts Ali appears to have been chosen by God to become Muhammad's representative, that Muhammad concurred with this, and that the two men became one. This revelation hinges around Muhammad's ascent (*miraj*) to God, which is a central part of Islamic thought and features also in the Koran, but the Bektashi version is unusual in its emphasis on the place that Ali holds within this divine transmission.

One of the founding tenets of Bektashi religious doctrine is that Allah, Muhammad and Ali are conceived in a triune relationship

---

<sup>8</sup> A recent case in point is Douglas-Klotz 2005.

(referred to as the *ucler*). Although God was described as the one truth-reality (*hakikat*), both Muhammad and Ali were regarded as special manifestations of the same divine essence of truth and reality (Birge 1937:132–34). They were thought of as a personification of some higher spiritual being united together in a miraculous and indivisible unity of personality (*tewhid*). Muhammad is present in Bektashi religious doctrine as the “beginning,” that is, as the founder of the religious way, whereas Ali is the last point, the “accomplishment,” that is, the mark of perfection to which a believer should strive. In Bektashi liturgical objects, pictorial art and theological tracts, the trinity Allah-Muhammad-Ali is all-important. Ali is always depicted in a hierarchically organized divine triad, miraculously unified with the Prophet and Allah, the supreme God (Birge 1937:217; De Jong 1989). Even in everyday speech, Muhammad and Ali are understood as the same manifestation of, and as identical to, the divine, the ultimate truth-reality.

The cult of Ali in Bektashism, as in certain other dervish orders, carried to an extreme, was a major cause of friction. It was exaggerated to a degree intolerable to the orthodox mind, especially when in extreme cases it culminated in his deification, or in any case, in a veneration detrimental to that of the Prophet. For orthodox Islam, Muhammad and Ali are human beings and they cannot be of divine essence. In a much symmetrical but inverse relation, for the doctrine of Trinity in Catholic orthodoxy there cannot be any hierarchical projection within a divine essence. Now, just as there is a Christian heresy of Docetism, that refuses the Trinity and denies the fusion of divinity and human nature as inseparably united and fully achieved in the person of Christ, in a symmetrically inverse relationship, the divinity of Muhammad and Ali is obviously a very extremist and heretical Shiite concept.

In the history of Christianity, the recognition of Jesus Christ's divinity seemed to threaten Christian monotheism, while the denial of his divinity put salvation in doubt. Hence the doctrine of Trinity represented the radical reformulation of the doctrine of Godhead to

meet the demands of Christian faith. It was formulated at the Nicene Council in the fourth century, and became since the formal statement of orthodox Christian belief. In striking similarity, Balim Sultan, the great reformer of the Bektashi order appointed in the sixteenth century by the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II, is said to have formalized the belief system that propounded the concept of trinity peculiar to Bektashism (Norton 2001:171), which is still in force amongst the current leaders of the order.

Baba Rexhebi, for instance, the influential leader of the Albanian Bektashi foundation of Michigan, in one of his treatises on Bektashism, makes a clear distinction between the triune Bektashi conception of divinity comprising inseparably the Ultimate Truth-Reality of God, Muhammad and Ali, and the heretical and heterodox traditions in Bektashi conceptions regarding the divinity of Ali. Furthermore, he once again maintains that the order respects the rituals of the faith and insists that Bektashi rituals are not in opposition to Sunni Islam, that Bektashism is “within Islam” and, sometimes, that it is even the “real” Islam (Rexhebi 1970). Allegations of this kind, fervently claimed by religious scholars (Izeti 2001:53–55), or naively justified by seemingly well-intentioned local scholars (Rexhepagiqi 1999:258), may well be noticed by area specialists (Clayer 1990:77–78; Norris 1993:94), but without necessarily explaining — nor indeed understanding at all — that a deep evolution had been already achieved, not only in organizational and political structures, but also in theological and religious conceptions.

When during the Communist period, Baba Rexhebi escaped to the United States where he founded the Bektashi lodge of Detroit, he came into contact with more sophisticated types of Sufism, read in English the works of Western Orientalists, specifically French Orientalist Henry Corbin (e.g. Corbin 1971, 1979, 1982, 1983), and understood that to survive, Bektashism would need to go through a drastic revision. In his theological treatise he tried to put Bektashism in the perspective of Muslim mysticism and relate it to other more elaborate forms of Sufism. In particular, he demonstrated that



Bektashism is closely related to Iranian Shiism, and he tried to dismiss the shamanistic and pre-Islamic influences in order to bring Bektashism back onto the path of Shiite orthodoxy. As this book is the only one of its kind available in the Albanian language, his work had a tremendous influence on Bektashis, even though the doctrines found in it differ greatly from the Bektashi traditions.

There is no wonder afterwards that precisely his book opened the door to Iranian influence in post-communist Albania, which is aimed at bringing all the Bektashis back to the Shiite flock and hardening the orthodox line of the order. Similarly, amongst the different factions competing for political audience in Turkey after the revival in the 1990s, there is a reformulation of Bektashi-Alevism in connection with Iranian Shiism that sometimes moves in a direction quite different from the one mostly taken for granted. While active in West Europe, particularly in Germany, it is also said to influence the Alevi villages in Turkey (Shankland 2003:169). In Albania, among other things, a significant number of new Bektashi dervishes are sent to Iran for religious training at the Theological Faculty of the Holy City of Qom. It is probable that when they return, they will be much closer to Iranian Shiism than Bektashism ever was.

Indeed, instead of the traditional local leaders, they already regard themselves bound to spiritual leaders who are sent from Iran. From them, they learn a form of Shiism that insists on the veiling of women, on men and women worshipping apart, and upon the importance of the *Sheriat*. Rather than reject mosques, this movement appears to create or build Shiite mosques which act as centres of religious activity in a way that is unusual in Bektashi tradition. In this case, it appears that the segregating, puritanical elements of orthodox practice have come to the fore, and once more with an emphasis on the subordination of women. The result appears to be a religious revolutionary spirit that is as potentially aggressive as any other form of fundamentalism.

Once again, specialists have not failed to touch upon these recent conflictual developments within Bektashism. After the 6th Congress

of the Albanian Bektashis in Tirana, for instance, growing opposition is noticed among the remaining Bektashis in Macedonia and Kosova as well as within immigrant Bektashi communities in Western Europe and overseas against Arch-grandfather Reshat Bardhi in Tirana. Yet, quite simplistically, no other explanation is offered than the supposed weakness of the current leader of the Bektashis, who unlike his energetic predecessors, seems to be only “an old man with little education” who “lacks the vision necessary for the movement’s survival” (Lakshman-Lepain 2002:54).

### *Concluding Remarks*

The establishment of dervish orders can be considered as the organized form of mysticism, and the psychological affinity between mysticism and pantheism, related as much to dualist and gnostic conceptions as to the Shiite devotion to Ali, has been pointed out. This is doubtless justified, but at the very starting moment of organization and systematization, there must occur either a split into different sects or a beginning to create a new separate orthodoxy of its own (Kissling 1954:25). A moment of crisis comes at this point, for mysticism does not allow itself to be pressed into a system originating in rational considerations. The contrast of any mysticism to its own orthodoxy, as far as it exists, as it does in the case of Bektashism, lies in the fact that mysticism is always based on a feeling of pantheistic wholeness, while any monotheism is the result of intellectual thought. The all-embracing sentiment relies on itself, while monotheism and any form of theism are the results of a search for causes. The development of orthodoxy is aimed precisely to overcome these irreconcilable differences.

The overall model finally turns around a classic issue of modern social anthropology that assumes that both culture and the social order are inculcated by the authority to which people have given their subservience and that those favoured by the social order often teach successfully their own validation. An obvious instance is the

way that religious leaders who are in a privileged position at the top of the hierarchy tend to profess, and even insist upon, a world-view that maintains that hierarchy. They may teach that they are particularly favoured by God to fulfil that role, claiming that either holy writ or spiritual knowledge ordains, even demands, their assuming a dominant position.

Basically, translated in sociological terms, this means that the rigid, intolerant and authoritarian attitudes of the local religious dignitaries, as well as the formalism and dogmatism prevailing in all fields, religious or political, simply express the haunting fear that they will lose their power. Within the political system, as Levtzion has argued for other contexts (Levtzion 1979:213), Islam and religious ideology are by no means abstract concepts, but represent different social groups competing to extend their influence over political authority. A religious leader might react first against established authority out of personal or factional interest or ambition, or he might be a channel for the expression of social discontents. Yet very soon leaders of heterodox movements will often aspire to political power. Normally, religious leaders from local hagiocracies sooner or later will evolve into pillars of the established order and the society at large.

Every Church, having been a sect itself at its beginnings, that is, a movement of social and religious protest breaking with society at large, ends up being reconciled with the latter. As Bryan Wilson has argued, the first stage of this process normally occurs at the second generation of members. Characteristically, there is a loss of the original spontaneity in all fields, the creation of professional ministries, the adoption of oaths, a positive attitude toward society at large and the acceptance of pluralism. This transformation parallels the access of members of the group to respectable social status, whereas the sects, originally very much in reaction against society at large, soon become *established* when the second generation takes the reins, even though there will always be a *first* generation to be recruited in a sect (Wilson 1990).

Protest may come within a recognized religious group and establish an *ecclesiola in Ecclesia*, a religious “way”, or a *collegium pietatis*, characterized by mysticism, as in the case of early Bektashism. But it may also lead to dissidence and factionalism, in which case we often observe the formation of ecclesiastic bodies of the Church type, or of semi-ecclesiastic bodies such as autonomous Churches or, again, of new sects to which ecclesiastic and theological terminology will preferably refer as either schism or heresy, and recent political discourse as fundamentalism.

In conclusion, I believe we must put the dialectics of the development of Bektashism into the same perspective as the reformist vision of all other “revived forms of Islam” (Voll 1994) whose prime ideal is the integration of religious and political authority, which implies an activist political concept of Islam. The active commitment comes to destroy corrupt versions of Islam and bring into being an ideal Muslim community modelled on the example of the Prophet. Such an ideal may spread first in religious circles, but soon make a wide social impact, the reformers being particularly effective in organizing religious movements in transition societies. Many reformist movements in lineage or tribal societies the world over in this way led to the formation of states dedicated to the integration of political and religious authority (Evans-Pritchard 1949; Geertz 1960; Peacock 1978). Similarly, the contemporary Islamic revival, the so-called fundamentalist movements, are inspired by the vision of a prophetic community. They attempt to return to the principles of Islamic morality and to a renewal of personal commitment to the symbolic foundations of Islam. They commonly aim to control the state and to use the power of the state to enforce what is believed to be the true Islam.

Still, the constant tension that subsists between orthodoxy and mystical movements is not exclusive to Islam. The polemic against sects and heterodox religious movements is primarily and essentially expressed in terms of conflict on doctrinal grounds. If the sociological perspective points to the economic and social roots of

religious movements, it tends to underestimate the importance of the religious structure itself. Up to now, the ideological and doctrinal field has been left exclusively in the hands of theologians, occasionally disputed by Orientalist and Medievalist historians. I have discussed elsewhere the particular affinity that sociologists and anthropologists have always shown between new religious movements and social, cultural and national crisis movements, as well as the extent to which religious ideas must be regarded either as a justification for liberationist movements or as an ideology justifying domination (Doja 2000a:677–79). The analysis of doctrinal-ideological and structural-organizational characteristics of Bektashism throughout its history that I presented here, especially in Ottoman Anatolia and early independent Albania, is an illustrative suggestion that it is precisely on these structural and ideological grounds that such a dialectical correlation may be correctly addressed.

College of Humanities  
University of Limerick  
Limerick  
Ireland  
albert.doja@ul.ie  
adoja@uamd.edu.al

ALBERT DOJA

## REFERENCES

- Barthes, Roland  
1993 [1957] "Le mythe aujourd'hui." In *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris: Seuil, Vol. 1, 681–719.
- Bausinger, Herman  
1993 *Volkskunde ou l'ethnologie allemande: De la recherche sur l'antiquité à l'analyse culturelle*. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme. [Orig. *Volkskunde: Von der Altertumsforschung zur Kulturanalyse*. Darmstadt 1971; Tübingen 1979.]
- Birge, John K.  
1937 *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac Oriental. Repr. 1994.
- Bloch, Maurice  
1985 "From Cognition to Ideology." In Richard Fardon (ed.), *Power and*

*Knowledge: Anthropological and Sociological Approaches*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 21–48.

Bourdieu, Pierre

- 1971 “Genèse et structure du champ religieux.” *Revue Française de Sociologie* 12(3):295–334. [Eng. trans. in *Comparative Social Research* 13 (1991) 1–44.]

Clayer, Nathalie

- 1990 *L’Albanie, pays des derviches: les ordres mystiques musulmans en Albanie à l’époque post-ottomane, 1912–1967*. (Balkanologische Veröffentlichungen 17.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- 2002 *Religion et nation chez les Albanais (XIX<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècles)*. (Analecta Isisiana 64.) Istanbul: Isis.

Corbin, Henry

- 1971 *L’homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien*. Paris: Éditions Présence. [Engl. trans. Boulder, CO/New York, NY: Random House 1978.]
- 1979 *Corps spirituel et Terre céleste: de l’Iran mazdéen à l’Iran chiite*. 2nd ed. Paris: Buchet-Chastel. [Engl. trans. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1989.]
- 1982 *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne*. Paris: Berg Publishers. [Engl. trans. London: Kegan Paul 1983.]
- 1983 *Face de Dieu, face de l’homme: herméneutique et soufisme*. Paris: Flammarion.

Cornell, Erik

- 2006 “A Surviving Neoplatonism: On the Creed of the Bektashi Order. Conversations with a Mursit.” *Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations* 17(1):1–20.

De Jong, Frederick

- 1989 “The Iconography of Bektashism: A Survey of Themes and Symbolism in Clerical Costume, Liturgical Objects and Pictorial Art.” *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 4:7–29.

Doja, Albert

- 2000a “Histoire et dialectique des idéologies et significations religieuses.” *European Legacy: Journal of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas* 5(5):663–686.
- 2000b “The Politics of Religion in the Reconstruction of Identities: The Albanian Situation.” *Critique of Anthropology* 20(4):421–438.
- 2004 “Cultural Politics and Spiritual Making of Anthropologists.” *Reviews in Anthropology* 33(1):73–94.
- 2006a “A Political History of Bektashism from Ottoman Anatolia to Contemporary Turkey.” *Journal of Church and State* 48(2):423–450.

- 2006b "A Political History of Bektashism in Albania." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7(1):83–107.
- Douglas-Klotz, Neil
- 2005 "Sufi Approaches to Peace: The Mystical and the Prophetic in Modern Culture." *Spirituality and Health International* 6(3):132–137.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward E.
- 1949 *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- 1965 *Theories of Primitive Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Faroghi, Suraiya
- 1995 "Conflict, Accommodation and Long-term Survival: The Bektashi Order and the Ottoman State (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)." In Popovic and Veinstein 1995:171–184.
- Foucault, Michel
- 1980 *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Geertz, Clifford
- 1960 *The Religion of Java*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Goffman, Erving
- 1974 *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Golpinarli, Abdalbaki
- 1958 (ed.) *Menakib-i Haci Bektash-i Veli: Vilayet-Name*. Istanbul.
- Gramatikova, Nevena
- 2001 "Changing Fates and the Issue of Alevi Identity in Bulgaria." In Antonina Zhelyazkova and Jorgen S. Nielsen (eds.), *Ethnology of Sufi orders: Theory and Practice* (The Fate of Muslim Communities in the Balkans 8), Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 564–621.
- Griaule, Marcel
- 1948 *Dieu d'eau: entretiens avec Ogotommeli*. Paris: Fayard.
- Guidetti, Vittoria Luisa
- 1998 "Elementi dualistici e gnostici della religione Bektashi in Albania fra il XVII e il XIX secolo." In Giulia Sfameni Gasparro (ed.), *Destino e salvezza: tra culti pagani e gnosi cristiana. Itinerari storico-religiosi sulle orme di Ugo Bianchi*, Cosenza: L. Giordano, 239–264.
- Izeti, Metin
- 2001 *Tarikati Bektashian*. Tetova, Macedonia: Çabej.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet T.
- 1994 *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.

Kehl-Bodrogi, Krisztina

- 1988 *Die Kizilbash/Aleviten: Untersuchungen über eine esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Anatolien.* (Islamkundliche Untersuchungen 126.) Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.
- 1992 *Vom revolutionären Klassenkampf zum "Wahren" Islam: Transformationsprozesse im Alevitum der Türkei nach 1980.* (Sozialanthropologische Arbeitspapiere 49.) Berlin: Freie Universität.

Kieser, Hans-Lukas

- 2001 "Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant Utopia: The Interactions Between Alevi and Missionaries in Ottoman Anatolia." *Die Welt des Islams* 41(1):89–111.

Kissling, Hans-Joachim

- 1954 "The Sociological and Educational Role of Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire." In Gustave E. Grunbaum (ed.), *Studies in Islamic Cultural History* (Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association 76), 23–35.

Koprulu, Mehmed Fuad

- 1926 "Les origines du bektashisme: essai sur le développement historique de l'hétérodoxie musulmane en Asie mineure." *Actes du Congrès International d'Histoire des Religions*, Paris, Vol. 2, 391–411.
- 1993 [1922] *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion (Prolegomena)*. Ed. Gary Leiser. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press.

Kressing, Frank

- 2002 "A Preliminary Account of Research Regarding the Albanian Bektashis: Myths and Unresolved Questions." In Frank Kressing and Karl Kaser (eds.), *Albania, a Country in Transition: Aspects of Changing Identities in a South-East European Country* (Schriften des Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung 51), Baden-Baden: Nomos, 65–91.

Lakshman-Lepain, Rajwantee

- 2002 "Albanian Islam: Development and Disruptions." In Frank Kressing and Karl Kaser (eds.), *Albania, a Country in Transition: Aspects of Changing Identities in a South-East European Country* (Schriften des Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung 51), Baden-Baden: Nomos, 39–64.

Leach, Edmund

- 1972 "Melchisedech and the Emperor: Icons of Subversion and Orthodoxy." *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 5–14.

Levtzion, Nehemia

- 1979 (ed.) *Conversion to Islam*. New York, NY: Holmes & Meier.



Massicard, Elise

- 2005 *L'autre Turquie: Le mouvement aléviste et ses territoires*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Mauss, Marcel

- 1950 [1924] "Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques." In *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 143–279. [English translation: *The Gift: The Form and Reason for exchange in archaic societies*, trans. W.D. Halls, foreword by Mary Douglas. New York/London: Norton 1990.]

Melikoff, Irene

- 1992 *Sur les traces du Soufisme turc: recherches sur l'Islam populaire en Anatolie*. (Analecta Isisiana 3.) Istanbul: Isis.
- 1998 *Hadji Bektach, un mythe et ses avatars: genèse et évolution du soufisme populaire en Turquie*. (Islamic History and Civilization 20.) Leiden: Brill.
- 2001 *Au banquet des Quarante: exploration au coeur du Bektachisme-Alevisme*. (Analecta Isisiana 50.) Istanbul: Isis.

Moosa, Matti

- 1988 *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects*. (Contemporary issues in the Middle East.) New York, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Müller, Klaus E.

- 1967 *Kulturhistorische Studien zur Genese pseudo-islamischer Sektengebilde in Vorderasien*. (Studien zur Kulturkunde 22.) Wiesbaden: Steiner.

Norris, Harry T.

- 1993 *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society Between Europe and the Arab World*. London: Hurst.

Norton, John D.

- 2001 "The Bektashi in the Balkans." In Celia Hawkesworth, Muriel Heppell and Harry T. Norris (eds.), *Religious Quest and National Identity in the Balkans* (School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London), New York, NY: Palgrave, 168–200.

Ocak, Ahmet Yashar

- 1983 *Bektashi Menakibnamelerinde Islam oncesi inanc motifleri [Patterns of pre-Islamic beliefs in Bektashi books of legend]*. Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi.
- 1995 "Remarques sur le rôle des derviches kalender dans la formation de l'ordre bektashi." In Popovic and Veinstein 1995:55–62.

Peacock, James L.

- 1978 *Muslim Puritans: Reformist Psychology in Southeast Asian Islam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Popovic, Alexandre, and Gilles Veinstein  
 1995 (eds.) *Bektachiyya: études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*. Istanbul: Isis.  
 1996 (eds.) *Les voies d'Allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'Islam des origines à aujourd'hui*. Paris: Fayard.
- Rabinow, Paul  
 1977 *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Rexhebi, Baba  
 1970 *Misticizma Islame dhe Bektashizma*. New York, NY: Waldon Press.
- Rexhepagiqi, Jashar  
 1999 *Dervishët, rendet dhe teqetë në Kosovë, në Sanxhak e në rajonet e tjera përreth, në të kaluarën dhe sot [Dervishes, Orders and their Institutions in Kosovo, Sandjak and around, in the Past and Today]*. Peja, Kosova: Dukagjini.
- Ricoeur, Paul  
 1981 *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*. Ed. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shankland, David  
 2003 *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Trimingham, J. Spencer  
 1971 *The Sufi orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon. Repr. 1998.
- Trix, Frances  
 1993 *Spiritual Discourse: Learning with an Islamic Master*. (Conduct and Communication Series.) Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Turner, Victor W.  
 1967 *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Voll, John O.  
 1994 *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Vorhoff, Karin  
 1995 *Zwischen Glaube, Nation und neuer Gemeinschaft: Alevitische Identität in der Türkei der Gegenwart*. (Islamkundliche Untersuchungen 184.) Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.
- Wach, Joachim  
 1958 *Sociology of Religion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Weber, Max

- 1978 [1922] *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- 2002 [1905] *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.

Wilson, Bryan R.

- 1990 *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Clarendon/Oxford University Press.

Zarcone, Thierry

- 2005 "Stone People, Tree People and Animal People in Turkic Asia and Eastern Europe." *Diogenes* 52(3):35–46.

## BOOK REVIEWS

RICHARD BONNEY, *Jihād. From Qur'ān to Bin Laden*. Foreword by Sheikh Dr. Zaki Badawi — London, New York et al.: Palgrave Macmillan 2004 (XXVI + 594 p.), ISBN 1-4039-3372-3.

Without any doubt, *jihād* is the most controversial term in modern Muslim debates regarding violence and propagation of faith in Islam. Westerners use to identify *jihād* with “holy war” for the propagation of Islam while many Muslims argue against by saying it means a great effort on the path of God where military action is not a primary concern but it can also mean religious activities such as prayers and fasting.

The book is a work of history which, in a solid attempt at putting all arguments forward, goes through the main lines of argumentation, from the Qur'ān up to the most recent debates in al-Qaeda circles. Though the book “makes no use of Arabic sources in Arabic, it is a work of synthesis, reliant on the detailed research of others; finally, perhaps worst of all, it unashamedly makes no excuse for using internet resources.” (XIII–XIV)

Part one deals with the use of *jihād* in the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, the first reports on conquests and their juridical justifications as well as on *jihād* in early Sufism. It shows that the Qur'ān itself contains different meanings of *jihād*. Therefore, different Muslim interpretations exist with regard to these texts. Consequently, the Sunnah interpretation goes along with this double understanding, of war on the one side and non military religious activity on the other. The same is true for biographies of Muhammad which sometimes underline his role as a political leader, sometimes, however, see in him a spiritual rather than a political leader. And surprisingly enough, we find the same kind of ambiguity in Sufism.

Part two studies Contextual Theorists and State Systems. As examples serve Ibn Taymiyah and the defensive *jihād* as a response to the Crusades and the Mongol Invasions. Then follows *jihād* as State System in form of the Ottoman State, Safavid Persia and the Moghul Empire as well as Wahhabism and *jihād* in the Colonial Period and Islamic Revivalism. It is

obvious that the meaning of *jihād* as military defense prevails in all these cases.

Part three is dedicated to Sunni political Jihādists of the 20th century such as Mawdudi, Hasan al-Banna', Qutb, to Shi'a Depiction of *jihād* and Martyrdom.

Part four describes the most recent debates with regard to Palestinian *jihād* from the times of the British Mandate up to present and Osama bin Laden's global *jihād*. It gives a clear description of present conflicts world-wide including Hamas and the Palestinian *intifādahs* as well as bin Laden's and his group's interpretation of *jihād*. The last two interpretations are distortions in the author's view.

In conclusion, the author correctly states "that *jihād* is a multi-faceted phenomenon both in theory and practice. There is no single, all-embracing concept that has been applied within the long, complex and sometimes even tortuous, course of Islamic history. Rather, there have been continual selections of texts and doctrines and the adoption of different practices, in accordance with cultural traditions and the needs and circumstances of the period. Few of the *jihāds* which we have considered in their historical context have conformed to a modern understanding of the theory: they were either preached and launched by individuals, not by the state, and subject to an excess of violence; or, alternatively, they were launched by states acting not in the defense of the faith but in their dynastic or national interests. Fewer still among the *jihāds* of history would have passed the modern test of "just war". The best case for *jihāds* which would have passed such tests, those launched against colonial expansion by the Western powers, inevitably ended in failure because of the superior military resources which the colonial power could deploy against them." (399)

The book is the best of its kind on the subject I have ever come across. It is extremely helpful in giving arguments against all kinds of historical justification of *jihād* cases. On the other hand, it also argues effectively against classical stereotypes in the debate by stating that "there is no legitimate offensive *jihād*; nor should Islam be regarded as a 'religion of the sword'." (400) It shows the "need for mainstream Islam to embrace positively the existence of pluralist societies in the contemporary world" (407) in defending *jihād* as a struggle "for justice and the betterment of

the human condition" (418) as well as "a struggle against terrorism." (420) In all, the book is a solid study with a clear position in favour of a strong commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the dialogue between cultures and religions, the acceptance of the diversity of traditions, the respect of human rights of the individual, including the right to gender equality and the right to freedom of religion, and the development of democratic political participation on the basis of equal citizenship (cf. pp. 421–422).

Seminar für Religionswissenschaft  
Universität Hannover  
Im Moore 21  
30167 Hannover  
Germany  
antes@mbox.rewi.uni-hannover.de

PETER ANTES

KOCKU VON STUCKRAD, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* — London and Oakville: Equinox 2005 (xii + 167 p.) ISBN 1–84553–034–9 (paperback) \$ 28.95 and ISBN 1–84553–033–0 (hardback).

Western esotericism has over the last decade or two become an established topic of academic study. As such, it has come to share some of the features characteristic of many nascent scholarly fields. On the one hand, scholarship is marked by a plurality of only partially compatible approaches, with specialists still debating basic issues of demarcation, terminology and methodologies. On the other, there is an acute need for introductory works, suitable for opening up a complex and rapidly expanding area of study to students and other interested readers. It would hardly seem an obvious choice or an easy matter to write a book that deals with Western esotericism at both levels. Nevertheless, Kocku von Stuckrad has done precisely that.

Contentious issues of demarcation are at stake already in the subtitle. The term *esoteric* was until fairly recently understood etymologically, as an "inner" (Greek *eso-*) corpus of secret knowledge available to a select few. Then, in 1992, the doyen of the study of esotericism, Antoine Faivre,

re-defined Western esotericism as a “mode of thought” characterized by, *inter alia*, theories of correspondences, a view of nature as a living organism, imagination and mediating symbols as a means of access to spiritual insight, and an experience of personal transmutation when this insight is attained. The concept of secret knowledge is conspicuously absent from the list. For a decade, the scholarly community largely followed Faivre’s lead, and many studies have used his defining features as a check-list against which specific currents have been assessed and classified.

Very recently, Faivre’s approach has again been questioned, and various alternative understandings of esotericism have been proposed, by the author of the present book as well as others. When von Stuckrad devotes the first chapter of his book to this issue, his readers are immediately confronted with complex and contentious issues.

Faivre’s typology can easily be understood in quasi-essentialist terms, as a claim for the separate and unique status of an unproblematically distinguishable group of esoteric currents. However, the fact that “esotericism” has often served as a rhetorical term for the negative Other of the religious mainstream, does not imply that scholarship should concur by isolating esotericism from its cultural context. Von Stuckrad wishes to firmly resituate esotericism in the religiously plural landscape of the West. “Esotericism,” in this perspective, can be seen as a culturally available option used by individuals and groups who wish to exchange ideas and practices with others, or to construct boundaries against them. The author for this reason prefers to speak of *the esoteric* as a form of discourse, rather than of *esotericism* as common name for distinctly demarcated currents — the book title and the frequent references to *esotericism* in the text notwithstanding.

In the politics of identity construction, the topos of privileged insight, a scarce resource available to the esoteric insider, which had disappeared from sight in Faivre’s typology, reappears with full force. Esoteric discourse hinges not least on the claim that “we” are in the know, while “they” remain ignorant.

Following these theoretical preambles, readers are presented with a brief history in eight chapters of the esoteric in Western religious history. This overview offers a highly readable account, accessible even to the novice to the field.

A chapter on esotericism in the ancient world concentrates on Hermetism and Gnosticism, cautiously alerting the reader to the contentious nature of the latter term. The third chapter is devoted to Jewish mysticism, a prime example of religious pluralism and interchange. The borders between traditions were porous in both directions: (neo-)Platonic ideas could be incorporated into a Jewish context, only to be re-appropriated by Christian writers at a later stage in history. Unfortunately, no similar chapter outlines the many interchanges with the Islamic world, despite a programmatic call for such an inclusive approach in the introduction.

Chapter 4, "The Renaissance," touches on the Middle Ages as well, although the authors discussion of esotericism in that period remains extremely brief. Major names from the 16th and 17th century — Agrippa, Reuchlin and others — are reviewed in the fifth chapter.

The remaining chapters of the book pursue the history of the esoteric into the modern epoch, showing how the quest for perfect knowledge survived and adapted in an age ostensibly preoccupied with science and rationality. One of the most conspicuous innovations was the way in which esoteric discourse increasingly became transmitted through institutionalized religious movements. A chapter on this issue leaves readers with a fair impression of *how* people interested in esoteric discourse organized themselves, while it remains less clear *why* this important change in the European religious landscape should have taken place.

An overview of more than two thousand years of history, compressed into approximately 130 pages, will have to make some difficult choices. Rather than e.g. choosing just a few highlights, von Stuckrad covers a lot of ground. The pace can therefore on occasion be quite breath-taking: mesmerism and spiritualism are allocated one page each, New Thought psychology is discussed in less than half a page, many important figures are merely mentioned in passing. Specialists on various historical periods may no doubt question the decision to allot more or less space to specific individuals, groups or currents, but the author has at least in part remedied the inevitable strictures imposed by the format of his book by including a generous bibliography of basic works for further study.

Von Stuckrad's volume is topical indeed. The discussion in his first chapter raises important questions in a field that has so far only been weakly theorized. The historical survey in the remainder of the book is a welcome addition to the literature on a field where there has been a distinct



lack of suitable material at the introductory level. *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* deserves the large audience it will no doubt receive.

University of Southern Denmark  
Campusvej 55  
5250 Odense SV  
Denmark  
ohammer@ifpr.sdu.dk

OLAV HAMMER

HARVEY WHITEHOUSE, *Modes of Religiosity. A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission* — Walnut Creek, CA a.o.: Alta Mira Press 2004 (193 p.) ISBN 0-7591-0615-0 (paperback). €23.50.

The Theory of the two divergent *Modes of Religiosity* provided by the anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse belongs to the wider field of the emergent Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) recently introduced in an article by Jesper Sorensen.<sup>1</sup>

The agenda of the CSR is to analyse and explain the origin, development and transmission of religious ideas on universal cognitive constraints. Culture and religion are the result of evolutionary processes of cognitive mechanisms, “that drive the selection of culturally widespread representations.” (7) Religion, therefore, is not a *sui generis* phenomenon, but an evolutionary product of human brainfunctions. Underlying universal cognitive processes and mechanisms are responsible for some similar religious phenomena, “whereas the emergence of a specific phenomenon at a particular time and place depends on other, contextual factors.”<sup>2</sup> This approach opens new possibilities to create specific scientific classifications, grounded in explanatory theories. The theory provided by Whitehouse is based on these assumptions.

In his theory, Whitehouse distinguishes between two forms of religious practice which he puts into interrelation with two divergent forms of longterm memory. The basics for his theory are preceded in two for-

---

<sup>1</sup> See Jesper Sorensen, “Religion in Mind: A Review Article of the Cognitive Science of Religion,” *Numen* 52 (2005) 465–494.

<sup>2</sup> Sorensen (2005), 469.

mer monographs.<sup>3</sup> The structure of the book contains three main chapters, whereas in the first part “Cognition and Religious Transmission” the concept of counterintuitive representations is presented. With reference to the theory of counterintuitivity, provided by Pascal Boyer,<sup>4</sup> the author distinguishes between “Cognitively Optimal” and “Cognitively Costly Religions.” The former concept is based on the “naturalness” of religious ideas as introduced by Boyer, which are characterized by the irritation of intuitive or ontological categories (of perception). Beliefs with this kind of counterintuitive qualities activate more attention than others and therefore are memorized easier. The latter concept of “Cognitively Costly Religion”, on the contrary, shows that there are some forms of religious ideas “that are hard to understand and demand enormous cognitive resources to manage and transmit.” (51) More complex ideas about counterintuitive agency need higher cognitive effort and also ritual, material, and labor expenses to be transmitted. With this kind of differentiation the author separates folk-religious concepts like ghosts or the belief in Santa Claus from more expendable concepts like complex god-genealogies or difficult ritual procedures. “The latter concepts require costly support in terms of both memory and motivation.” (55) Even though these theoretical assumptions remain controversial in their epistemological foundations, especially concerning the *explanandum* of the “naturalness of religious ideas,” the innovative concept of counterintuitivity and attractivity of religious representations provide fruitful theoretical considerations for future research within the science of religion.

The second main chapter “The Theory of Modes of Religiosity” provides the core idea and most inventive part of the book. Here the author operates with two divergent memory systems. The sociopolitical morphology of religious practice, thus, depends on two forms of memory functions which are responsible for the transmission of religious ideas in two divergent *doctrinal* and *imagistic* modes. The concept of semantic and episodic memory goes back to the famous psychologist Endel

---

<sup>3</sup> Harvey Whitehouse, *Inside The Cult: Religious Innovation and Transmission in Papua New Guinea*, Oxford, a.o. 1995. Whitehouse. *Arguments and Icons: Divergent Modes of Religiosity*, Oxford, a.o. 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, New York, NY: Basic Books 2001.

Tulving.<sup>5</sup> The author now argues that these two divergent memory systems highly affect the transmission of religious ideas. The semantic memory refers to more common and everyday knowledge like a lexical memory. The episodic or autobiographical memory, on the other hand, works with more personal experiences which are memorized as specific episodes.

The doctrinal mode is constituted by the activation of the semantic memory when religious ideas are repeated frequently. It is characterized by widespread, inclusive, standardized, centralized, and unpersonal forms of religious practice. In the imagistic mode, on the contrary, it is the episodic memory that is activated by high emotional arousal. Only rare, emotionally “dramatic” experiences remain as specific episodes in the autobiographical memory. High emotional arousal takes place in climactic rituals and becomes a reference point for individual “spontaneous exegetical reflections” (SER)(72,113) which are interpreted as revelations or personal inspirations. The associated meanings in climactic rituals are rarely shared by the community, whereas this kind of experience more likely promotes the recollection of the participants of the ritual. The imagistic mode is characterized by smaller groups, exclusive, ideologically heterogeneous, uncentralized, and personal forms of religious practice. These two forms of transmission can be found in every religious tradition and its twelve specific variables have wider consequences for the sociopolitical morphology of religious traditions. “What the theory of modes of religiosity sets out to explain, then, is the *tendency* for religious systems to gravitate toward divergent attractor positions.” (76)

In spite of some theoretical and empirical challenges to the theory, the differentiation between semantically based and experienced based forms of transmission and adoption of religious knowledge seem to point towards another very interesting aspect: the role of embodiment and incorporation. These aspects are not explicitly discussed in the theory, but offer space for further research. In reference to Sorensen, the emergence of religious phenomena do not only depend on cognitive conditions, but also on some contextual factors. As the psychologists Hans J. Markowitsch

---

<sup>5</sup> See E. Tulving, “Episodic and Semantic Memory,” in *Organization of Memory*, Tulving, E. und W. Donaldson (eds.), New York, NY: Academic Press 1972.

and Harald Welzer pointed out, the development of the autobiographical memory is influenced by biological as well as social factors.<sup>6</sup> The human brain and its memory functions organizes and develops its phylogenetic and ontogenetic structures in relation to its physical and social environment.<sup>7</sup> The development of the memory cannot be isolated from the development of other cognitive functions as well as motor-sensory acquirements.<sup>8</sup> Body movement and body knowledge, therefore, can be seen as a bridge that connects social reality and cognitive functions. The anthropologist John Blacking underlines “shared somatic states”<sup>9</sup> which synchronize emotions, body, and mental representations of a social community. These considerations could be put into account for further research about the relation between social reality and cognitive mechanisms and the role of embodiment within the theory of the modes of religiosity.

In his last main chapter, “Theoretical and Empirical Challenges”, the author emphasizes the need to test the theory according to different empirical cases. With this congenial statement the author shows that he is not placing the theory above the empirical realm. The author conflates psychological and sociopolitical factors and, through this, opens new insights to their interdependencies. This dichotomous model has some analogies to some previous theories about religion like those from Max Weber, Ernest Gellner, Victor Turner, or Fredrik Barth. However, according to Whitehouse, all these attempts lack of a real explanation about the origins of these contrasting forms of religious practice. (64) The outstanding explanatory claim of this cognitive approach offers a promising interdisciplinary theory for future research and tries not to refrain from “hard” theorizing. Much empirical and theoretical evidence for this theory has already been made,<sup>10</sup> but more is still needed in order to provide a wider view on the

---

<sup>6</sup> Hans J. Markowitsch and Harald Welzer, *Das autobiographische Gedächtnis*, Stuttgart: 2005, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Markowitsch/Welzer 2005, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Markowitsch/Welzer 2005, 63.

<sup>9</sup> John Blacking, “Towards an Anthropology of the Body,” in *The Anthropology of the Body*, Blacking, John (ed.). London, New York, San Francisco: 1977, 10.

<sup>10</sup> See Whitehouse/Laidlaw (eds.), *Ritual and Memory*, Oxford: Academic Press 2004; Whitehouse/McCauley (eds.), *Mind and Religion*, Oxford: Alta Mira Press, Walnut Creek a.o. 2005.

interrelations between cognitive mechanisms, the individual body, and social reality.

Seminar für Allgemeine Religionswissenschaft  
Zimmer 2.70  
Hüfferstraße 27  
48149 Münster  
Germany  
Sebastianschueler@gmx.de

SEBASTIAN SCHÜLER

CELIA E. SCHULTZ, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic*. —  
Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press 2006.  
Studies in the History of Greece and Rome. (xiii + 234 p.) ISBN  
0-8078-3018-6 (cloth). \$ 39.95.

Celia E. Schultz's study intends "to enhance the picture of female religious activity in the Roman world." (3) She has definitely reached this goal by providing detailed and abundant evidence that women of the Roman Republic were not concerned *only* about fertility, childbirth and childcare. Throughout the book, the author strives to challenge established ideas on women's religious activities. She completes and corrects the picture of both the male and female worshipper. She also examines the figures of gods and goddesses which have been too hastily classified and narrowed to "women's deities." In each chapter, Schultz unfolds the methodologies that underlie the use of each type of evidence for the study of Roman religion and Roman women. A short introduction outlines the methodological difficulties of working on women's religious activities and briefly but clearly sums up the assertions of the author. The titles of the five chapters reflect the kind of evidence specifically surveyed.

In chapter one, *Literary Evidence*, Schultz illustrates that literary evidence has been up to now approached with preconceived ideas. She pulls apart the assumption that female involvement in the cult implies that the divinity must be concerned with issues that are traditionally feminine. Indeed, this assumption leads to view some goddesses as women's deities rather than powerful political and military goddesses. The tendency to disregard women's public participation in politically significant observance is also denounced by the author. Three carefully chosen cases demonstrate some of the presumptions and methodologies used by other authors while

approaching the texts: the rituals around goddess Juno Sospita, the expiation of prodigies and finally the foundation of the temple of Fortuna Muliebris. The lack of critical distance towards the Ancient's authors has led some scholars to paraphrase the content of the ancient sources. Schultz thus points to the necessity *not* to take Ancient authors at their word, even though this may be problematic since these accounts are at times scarce. In contrast, the author refers to the works of Pomeroy and Kraemer whose contribution to the knowledge of women's religious beliefs and practices is twofold. First, they identify several stereotypical ideas found in Ancient's literature (excessive religiosity and gullibility of women). Secondly, they demonstrate that traditionally feminine concerns did constitute an important component to the larger framework of Roman religion. This was in itself a "gender critical turn" but this was not enough to complete the picture. Schultz explains that the tacit assumption that women were concerned with issues of fertility, childbirth and children leads scholars to focus foremost on the deities and cults in these fields. This results in a restriction of the field of investigation and on the false presumption that female involvement for a particular cult indicates that the deity is a "women's deity." Schultz attempts to refute the claim that there must be necessarily a link between women and fertility rituals. Her discussion of the cult of Bona Dea convincingly illustrates how this kind of relationship can be over-extended. The author also gives a detailed analysis of the case of Juno Sospita. This military and political goddess whose image is clearly a martial one ends up being a "women's deity" due to a problem of interpretation of epigraphic and literary evidence. The next part of chapter one explores the expiation of prodigies (*supplicationes*). This practice shows women playing a wider role in Roman public religious life than previously thought. Schultz correctly states that "[w]hile the majority of relevant accounts are too brief and incomplete to be of much importance individually, taken together they present a significant challenge to the common view of female experience." (28) She focuses precisely on these.

Chapter two, *Women in the Epigraphic Record*, surveys the epigraphic evidence on women's religious practices on material such as stone, metal and clay. Schultz takes into account *circa* seventy relevant dated inscriptions.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The author has surveyed the Republican inscriptions in various editions and supplementary volumes of *CIL*, Degraasi's *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae*

After giving methodological considerations on the numbers and statistics of Republican inscriptions, the author notes that “women do not appear in inscriptions regularly until the second century, about a century after male worshippers do.” (49) Indeed, freeborn men are the first individuals to be named most frequently on inscriptions. Later appeared the names of free-born women. Finally, freedmen and freedwomen also gained access to sufficient economical power to have inscriptions in their own name. These inscriptions reflect public beneficence, participation in public life, self-advertisement and expression of a cultural identity. The author distinguishes two main categories of inscriptions in which women appear: dedications by worshippers including religious beneficence (such as the refurbishment of a shrine) and sepulchral inscriptions or inscriptions identifying a women having held an official position within a cult (such as female priesthood, or the most famous bronze plaque of Tirol, the *Senatus Consultum* pertaining to the Bacchic scandal of 186 BCE). Of course the epigraphic record supports the “standard” picture of women’s religious activities (women worshippers addressing female deities about fertility, childbirth and children issues). Schultz on the other hand concentrates on the few but significant cases in which the female religious activity extends beyond these cults and on inscriptions where women address gods that are not thought of as “women’s deities” such as Jupiter, Apollo and Hercules.

In the same way, the author emphasizes the fact that cults thought to attract only women worshippers also appealed to men. She concludes that “the predominance of one gender or the other among the devotees of a certain god was more often due to personal preferences rather than official cult restrictions.” (51) Female-authored dedications mostly pertained to private matters (such as requests or thanks for safe childbirth, continuing lactation, healing) and could also be done on the behalf of their family and loved-ones. Schultz focuses on the few cases (also outside of Rome) of public female religious activity such as dedications that are made mostly by groups of women. It seems that worshippers of both genders could approach gods or goddesses associated with financial or political domains and could also address deities which took care of family affairs.

---

and the volumes of *L'Année Epigraphique*. Schultz has found circa 70 dated relevant inscriptions. Schultz has also selected slightly less than 200 undated inscriptions from Dessau’s *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* which she did not take into account for the present discussion precisely because they were undated.

By making donations for the common good, the refurbishment or construction of sanctuaries is also a way for wealthy Roman women to show their euergetism and promote themselves as well as their families. While men supported mostly utilitarian public works (road, sewer, retaining wall), women seemed to focus more on religious sanctuaries that were quasi-public spaces during the Republican period. Restrictions which led to the exclusion of women from participating in most forms of public life relaxed over time and they were allowed to display their generosity and enjoy greater visibility. The author closely analyses the case of the refurbishment of Hercules' temple and points to the problem of the "exclusion" of women from Hercules' *sacrum*, a term that has many different related meanings. Basing her assertions on evidence from Aulus Gellius and Plutarch, Schultz states that "the *sacrum* in which Roman women did not participate was a sacrifice (*sacrificium*)."

(66) This case illustrates that epigraphic evidence sometimes corroborates yet at other times contradicts the literary evidence. In the second case, it makes it even more complementary. Epigraphic evidence also helps to resolve questions about female public and private priesthood, a discussion that the author completes in chapter five. The analysis of the *Senatus Consultum De Bacchanalibus* enables Schultz to state that "[g]ender was not as important as it appears in Livy's account . . . In the repression of the Bacchic ritual, class and social standing, not gender, were the primary criteria by which the Senate selected individuals for identification and restriction." (92)

Chapter three, *The Evidence of Votive Deposits*, is definitely the most original part of the book. Schultz considers groups of gifts offered to the gods in Roman and Etrusco-Italic areas. What is to be deduced from terracotta *uteri* and *phalli*? Focusing on anatomical votives, the author explains how they reflect the state of medical knowledge in Italy in the period of the middle Republic. Schultz discusses two previous studies on votives deposits by Fenelli and Comella from which she concludes that the proportion of gender-exclusive cults was smaller than the gender-inclusive ones. Labels such as "healing god" or "women's deity" must be applied cautiously not to blur the multifaceted nature of Roman cults. Contrary to what is commonly acknowledged it is likely that women often worshiped in the same sanctuaries the same gods as men. Temples and sanctuaries were more often than not open to both genders although sometimes the rites may have been gender-exclusive. Survey of votive deposits also shows that "Roman women enjoyed far more varied and



extensive participation in religious ritual than is often considered, and that Roman religion was on the whole less rigidly divided along gender lines than it sometimes appears.” (120)

Chapter four, *Household Ritual*, tries to reconstruct the role played by women within the sphere of domestic religion. Schultz undertakes here a difficult task since evidence on this particular issue is scarce. However, from the few literary details at her disposal she manages to draw a picture in which women — at least matrons — were not totally excluded from sacrifice. After clearly explaining who where the *dii familiares* (domestic gods) and what were their functions, Schultz stresses that “by the close of the first century, individual women were thought to possess a counterpart to the male genius called a *iuno*, and that the worship of the *iuno* was part of household ritual.” (125) The authority and importance of the *paterfamilias* in domestic ritual is a question purposely left aside. Instead, Schultz focuses on the authority and the duties of the matron substituting her husband in performing the rite or accomplishing it on her own initiative. Schultz discusses the respective roles of the *vilicus* and the *vilica* who act as surrogates for the master and the mistress of the house in their absence in religious and household-management issues.

The two most important centres of domestic ritual, the hearth (*focus*) and the store-room (*penus*), were under responsibility of the matron. Here Schultz draws an interesting parallel between these private responsibilities and the public ones fulfilled by priestesses such as the Vestals. Another main point in discussion is the ability of a woman to participate in a sacrifice, whether it is a public, private or familial one. From Schultz’ standpoint, scholars arguing that women were prevented from sacrifice altogether over-interpret the texts stating that women could not handle grain and meat nor consume wine (the three most important food items in sacrifice). Perhaps women were prevented to attend *only* some specific sequences of the ritual. The author thoroughly reviews and discusses the ancient sources on the prohibition on wine drinking for women in order to convince the reader of a less so categorical interdiction. Finally, she ends the discussion by stating that in some circumstances “Roman women could offer sacrifices to the gods in their own right, not just as substitutes . . . They could offer wine and they could make blood sacrifices” (136) and not just offer vegetal products to the gods.

I would name the fifth chapter, *Social Status and Religious Participation*, the conclusion of the book whereas the two insignificant pages of

*Conclusion* (151–152) are a too brief summary of the powerful assertions of this study. This last chapter comes to balance out the previous chapters and reminds the reader of the necessity to be subtle about using descriptive categories. Roman religious practices were shaped alongside lines of gender, social and marital status. There is a need to be precise when stating that a ritual was open to “women.” Which *women*? Rich, freeborn, freedwomen, citizen, non-citizen, plebeian, patrician, old, young, married, nubile, *matronae* or *virgines*. All these categories had different religious opportunities. The most documented case is the one of public and private priestesses. Among these priestesses, the Vestals are the ones we know most about. We also know about the marriage requirements of the *flamen dialis* and his wife as well as those of the *rex* and *regina sacrorum*. The standards of sexual priestly behaviour were different for priest and priestesses. For example, Vestal’s virginity and chastity were a must. Among less prestigious forms of priesthood, women could serve as *magistrae* and *ministrae*. This was mostly the case for women of freed or slave status whereas freeborn women generally could hold *sacerdotia*.

Besides priesthood, other religious honours existed for women according to various criteria such as being a matron, being the wife of a leading politician or of a man of similar importance (for instance the hostess of the annual rites of Bona Dea). However, the selection of a woman for a public religious event did not necessarily depend on her husband’s social or political status. For example, *matronae* could be selected by the Senate to handle a religious crisis affecting the feminine sphere. Only a careful cross-reading of several Ancient authors’ accounts of the same event enables Schultz to highlight the bias in them. In doing so she shows the false assumptions drawn by some scholars who lack sufficient critical distance. In the same way, the author re-opens the discussion about the interpretations of the matronal offering to Juno Regina in 207 BCE. It is incorrect to understand the restrictions that the State enforces on some of the public religious initiatives of women *only* as an attempt to keep them under control. Indeed, women were considered gullible and therefore needed to be protected and kept away from foreign deities whose cults appeared dangerous for them, for their families and eventually for the Roman State. Schultz argues that rituals were important in “strengthening social distinction and integrating different groups in society as a whole.” (146) This is true for all Romans and not only for women. There is a close relationship between social and religious grouping and we cannot analyse one without the other. Age,

marital/sexual and social status are therefore key-factors to understand women's religious activities. The division of women in groups was often made according to these criteria in order to organize rites, annual ceremonies and to allow or deny access to them as well as to certain sanctuaries. Schultz discusses numerous examples. She digs out specific episodes on Roman women and goddesses to reinterpret them with new critical distance. She thus shows the under looked diversity of women's religious practices in the Roman Republic and concludes that "women were vital participants in the religious lives of their families and their communities." (149)

*Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* takes us far away from the image of the Roman woman secluded in her own exclusive private sphere addressing only to female "women's goddesses" about "female concerns" (namely fertility, marriage, childbirth and childcare). The numerous, various and detailed examples will interest students in Roman religion and more generally those focusing on the religious activities of women. They will appreciate the hints to methodological issues and the discussion of the perception of Roman women in previous scholarly works. Schultz's "gender critical" reading leads to a new pertinent analysis. Detailed notes make this work a valuable reference for those who would like to study further a specific topic. The useful concordance of inscriptions quoted in the book and the detailed index of names will prove most helpful. This is a successful attempt to correct and complete the picture of women's religious activities in the Roman world. We can only wish for a similar task of re-reading and expanding the sources to be undertaken for other periods of Roman history and for Antiquity as a whole.

Université de Lausanne  
Faculté de théologie et de sciences des religions  
Section de sciences des religions  
Bâtiment Anthropole  
Quartier Dorigny  
1015 Lausanne  
Switzerland  
Florence.Pasche@unil.ch

FLORENCE PASCHE

NVMEN  
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW FOR THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

VOLUME LIII (2006)

CONTENTS

*Articles*

Albert DOJA, <i>Spiritual Surrender: From Companionship to Hierarchy in the History of Bektashism</i> .....	448
Alison B. GRIFFITH, <i>Completing the Picture: Women and the Female Principle in the Mithraic Cult</i> .....	48
Nathalie KOUAMÉ and Vincent GOOSSAERT, <i>Un vandalisme d'État en Extrême-Orient? Les destructions de lieux de culte dans l'histoire de la Chine et du Japon</i> .....	177
Michael LIPKA, <i>Notes on Pompeian Domestic Cults</i> .....	327
Alexander-Kenneth NAGEL, <i>Charitable Choice: The Religious Component of the US-Welfare-Reform — Theoretical and Methodological Reflections on "Faith-Based-Organizations" as Social Service Agencies</i> .....	78
Leela PRASAD, <i>Text, Tradition, and Imagination: Evoking the Normative in Everyday Hindu Life</i> .....	1
Jörg RÜPKE, <i>Triumphator and Ancestor Rituals Between Symbolic Anthropology and Magic</i> .....	251
Henrik Pontoppidan THYSSSEN, <i>Philosophical Christology in the New Testament</i> .....	133
Daniel VEIDLINGER, <i>When a Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures. Mahāyāna Influence on Theravāda Attitudes Towards Writing</i> ....	405
H.S. VERSNEL, <i>Red (Herring?) Comments on a New Theory Concerning the Origin of the Triumph</i> .....	290

*Review Article*

Christoph UEHLINGER, <i>Interested Companionship</i> .....	359
--	-----

*Book Reviews*

Stephen H. Phillips and N. S. Ramanuja Tatacharya, <i>Epistemology of Perception: Gaṅgeśa's Tattvacintāmaṇi Jewel of Reflection on the Truth (About Epistemology)</i> (Bogdan DIACONESCU) .....	112
---	-----

## Contents

John R. Hinnells, <i>The Zoroastrian Diaspora. Religion and Migration. The Ratanbai Katrak Lectures, the Oriental Faculty, Oxford 1985</i> (Michael STAUSBERG) .....	115
Karl-Heinz Kohl, <i>Die Macht der Dinge. Geschichte und Theorie sakraler Objekte</i> (Gustavo BENAVIDES) .....	120
Arie L. Molendijk, <i>The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands</i> (Jacques WAARDENBURG) .....	124
Max Charlesworth, Françoise Dussart, and Howard Morphy (eds.), <i>Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings</i> (Jeroen BOEKHOVEN) .....	221
Daniel Stökl ben Ezra, <i>The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century</i> (Petra VON GEMÜNDEN) .....	223
René Gothóni (ed.), <i>How to Do Comparative Religion? Three Ways, Many Goals</i> (Luther H. MARTIN) .....	227
Guy G. Stroumsa, <i>La fin du sacrifice. Les mutations religieuses de l'Antiquité tardive</i> , avec une préface de John Scheid (Francesca PRESCENDI) .....	230
<i>Du corps humain, au carrefour de plusieurs savoirs en Inde:</i> Mélanges offerts à Arion Roşu par ses collègues et ses amis à l'occasion de son 80e anniversaire / <i>The Human Body, at the Crossroads of Multiple Indian Ways of Knowing: Papers Presented to Arion Roşu by his Colleagues and Friends on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday</i> , Eugen Ciurtin (ed.) (Peter SCHREINER) .....	
	236
Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz and Randi R. Warne (eds.), <i>New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Volume 1: Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches; Volume 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches</i> (Michael STAUSBERG) .....	238
Jacco Dieleman, <i>Priests, Tongues, and Rites. The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)</i> (Youri VOLOKHINE) .....	385
Jonathan Roper, ed. <i>Charms and Charming in Europe</i> (David FRANKFURTER) .....	392
Einar Thomassen, <i>The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians"</i> (Michael A. WILLIAMS) .....	396
Richard Bonney, <i>Jihād. From Qurʾān to Bin Laden</i> (Peter ANTÉS) .....	511
Kocku von Stuckrad, <i>Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge</i> (Olav HAMMER) .....	513

## *Contents*

Harvey Whitehouse, <i>Modes of Religiosity. A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission</i> (Sebastian SCHÜLER) .....	516
Celia E. Schultz, <i>Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic</i> (Florence PASCHE) .....	520
<i>Publications Received</i> .....	130, 247, 402